

## **Elijah- A Man Like Us --James 5:17**

The study of this account of Elijah in 1 Kings 18 and 19 is really fascinating to me. The people of Israel followed the example of their evil kings. King Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. Ahab angered God by setting up alters for Baal worship throughout the land. Elijah, a prophet and mouthpiece of God, told Ahab that there would be a drought until he declared otherwise. God had warned His people in Deut. 28:23-24 that this would occur if they turned to idolatry. Ahab and the Israelites were punished, which lasted through 3 long years of drought. The lesson that God wants us all to learn is that He is a jealous God and he desires to be first in our lives and to be honored. God withdrew His blessings because of the people's idolatry. The idol Baal obviously, was unable to give them rain and there was great suffering in the land. After 3 years, God called Elijah out of hiding and told him to show himself to Ahab. Elijah told Ahab that the troubles had come upon Israel because he and his fathers had forsaken the commandments of God and worshipped the Baals. Elijah had Ahab call for all of the people of Israel as well as the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah to meet on Mt. Carmel. Elijah asks the people, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people answered him not a word, which really speaks volumes. Before beginning this test, Elijah prayed to God in the hearing of the people for God to demonstrate that He is the One True God of Israel. God desired to show His omnipotence and glory before He ended the drought. The prophets and the idols had to be shown to be false and empty of power. I Kings 18:36-37. 1 Kings 18:20-40 shows God's amazing power which resulted in the people of Israel worshipping God and calling the Lord their God. Please take the time to read these verses. Elijah was at a spiritual high. In the spirit of the Lord, he ran 20 miles to Jezreel. I wonder if Elijah was hoping and even expecting for the King and Queen to be humbled and turn to God because of the tremendous display of God's power? This did not happen. Jezebel threatened his life and Elijah became afraid. He ran another 80 miles into the wilderness. For a time, fear replaced Elijah's faith. He asked God to take his life. This is a lesson of how even the greatest spiritual giant can be brought low by allowing fear to replace his faith.

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I am finally getting to the crux of the lesson on how God handled Elijah's depression and insight on how to handle our own depression. My respect for Elijah did not lessen as I read that he was disillusioned, depressed and expressed thoughts of suicide. He was a man like us and was acting out of his feelings rather than his faith. Please observe how God met Elijah where he was. He will meet us with patience, understanding and compassion in our spiritual struggles, at whatever point we are at. This study is as much an opportunity to see God revealed to us, as it is a study on Elijah.

God, the Master Physician dealt with Elijah's depression and recorded His therapy for our insight and help. Thank you God for this amazing help and great wisdom.

### **God met his physical needs:**

God caused Elijah to take needed rest and nutrition. An angel of the Lord ministered to him, giving him food and having him rest. He was emotionally spent, physically exhausted and famished. The physical needs had to be met before anything else could happen.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 reminds us to take care of our bodies, for we are to glorify God with our bodies, His temple. We dishonor God when we do not take care for His temple. This is an important principle. The reader can reflect on this, realizing how important this is to God. Caring for His temple involves exercise, good nutrition and proper rest.

\*Reach for the walking shoes instead of the remote.

\*Reach for the apple instead of the donut.

\*Reach for the Bible instead of Facebook. Let His Words be the last thoughts as your drift off for needed rest.

### **Seek God:**

In the strength of that food, Elijah traveled 40 days and nights to Mt. Horeb. He went to the place where he hoped God would speak with him as He had spoken to Moses. God asked Elijah what he was doing there. Elijah's answer seems to be of despair, hopelessness but also self-pity. Elijah was told to go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. God revealed His great power through the wind breaking rocks, through an earthquake and then with fire. Yet God did not reveal Himself until Elijah heard a "still, small voice". Again, God asked Elijah what he was doing there.

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Interestingly, even though Obadiah had told Elijah that he had hid 100 prophets of God in a cave, Elijah tells God that he alone is left and that his enemies seek to take his life. Wrong ideas can go hand in hand with self-absorption. That is why communication with God is so vital. God shared that He had reserved 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. *1 Kings 19:18*. God helped Elijah see reality.

Prepare yourself to meet with God daily. You may not feel like it. Just do it! Your prayers may be jumbled and confusing, and you have trouble focusing. You may have difficulty reading even one Scripture. Just allow yourself to come to the Lord and to give Him your focus. Let the setting be quiet so you will not be distracted. Daily communion with God is vital for growing closer to Him and fortifying ourselves with His Word. We are familiar with Ps. 46:10- "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" Another verse that I love is in Isaiah 30:15.

### **Avoid negative self-talk:**

No one was with Elijah to help him regain his perspective. He isolated himself by leaving his servant behind. He allowed his doubt and fear to skew his thoughts in a negative way. There are several aspects of negative self-talk.

*Personalizing - You blame yourself for anything negative that happens.* Being aware that we have this tendency helps to counteract the thought by challenging yourself with reality testing.

*Filtering- Magnifying the negative aspects of a situation and filtering out the positive ones.* If you find yourself doing this, write down all of the things that have gone right.

*Catastrophizing-Anticipating the worst outcome.* Ask yourself how likely is this outcome? Work on your perspective by remembering how much God values you.

*Polarizing-You see things as only good or bad. There is no middle ground.* You are not a loser! You are worthy! Treat yourself with kindness. God tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves. That means that God expects us to love ourselves.

### **Focus on positive wisdom from Scripture:**

The Scripture has great wisdom in dealing with the whole nature of man. There is insight for our spiritual, physical, mental and emotional needs.

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*Philippians 4:8* “Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.... and *the God of peace will be with you.*

*2 Cor. 10:5* We are to “demolish arguments and every pretense that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” Choose to focus your mind on the thoughts pleasing to Christ.

God warned Cain to focus his mind on the right thoughts so he would not sin. Cain instead focused on the wrong thoughts and feelings- anger and jealousy-which led to murderous actions.

Change your mind-set by allowing God’s Word to transform you by the renewing of your mind. *Romans 12: 2*

Perhaps my employer asks me to do a task that I despise. Immediately, negative and complaining thoughts come in my head. I must take responsibility for what I choose to think. If I have allowed God’s Word to transform my mind, I focus on the Scripture that says, “Do all things without grumbling or complaining”. *Philippians 2:14*. To use Scripture as a weapon, one must know it. Jesus used Scripture as His defense against Satan’s temptations in the wilderness. *Matthew 4:1-11*. Fortify yourself with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. *Ephesians 6:17*.

## **Purpose**

God listens to Elijah, helps him to see the truth and then gives him a purpose. He tells him to **GO!** The best antidote for depression is to live out our purpose on this earth. Depression causes us to focus inward, often with negativity and self-pity. God’s solution is to focus upward and outward. Jesus said He came to do the Father’s will, not His own- John 6:38. “Jesus said unto them, my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work”- John 4:34. I believe that this single-minded focus on doing His Father’s wills is what gave Jesus the strength to “resolutely set His face toward Jerusalem”. Luke 9:51. He knew what awaited Him there. He knew what His death would entail; yet He needed to “finish His work”.

Elijah needed God to hit the “Reset” button after the victorious climax on Mt. Carmel. God sent Him forth with vital work and renewed purpose. God needed Elijah to continue to serve Him and His people. God needs us to do the same.

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## **Fellowship**

Part of God's plan was for Elijah to have the companionship of a like-minded servant of God. God gave Elijah the companionship and friendship of Elisha, who "became his servant" and eventually took the place of Elijah as the prophet of God. 1 Kings 19:16 foretold of the events of 2 Kings 2:1-17.

Elisha asked for and received a double portion of Elijah's Spirit after he witnessed Elijah being taken up to Heaven in chariot of fire. He took Elijah's "mantle" and became a tremendous prophet for God, leading His people through difficult times. (1 Kings 19:19, 2 Kings 2:13).

Think about the person that you can share your mantle with. Can you share with others your insight and spiritual wisdom? Are you able to comfort others as God has comforted you in your afflictions? 2 Cor. 1:4.

Do you emulate a godly marriage for others to learn from? Does your parenting help other younger couples to see the advantage of following God's wisdom? Do we, as older sisters, take younger women, in age or spiritual maturity, under our wing? Does the babe in Christ need grounding? This is so necessary for growth and to ensure that Satan does not snatch the young away. Do we do our best to help the new member feel like part of our family?

Do you have a gift for teaching children's class? Find the one who is interested in learning these skills and can profit from observing and helping with this great need. Do you have a gift for sharing God's Word to the lost? There are others who have such an interest but are unsure of where to start or how to develop this gift-Romans 12:3-8.

Do we need the companionship of our brothers and sisters in Christ? Romans 12:4-8 tells us that we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 1 Cor. 12 is a beautiful treatise on God's wisdom and plan for the family of God, the Body of Christ. These verses naturally lead into God sharing a more excellent way of having unity in the body. 1 Cor.13 teaches about the attitude and mindset of love that brings this unity and concern for one another into fruition.

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We become partakers of the divine nature through His promises to us. -2 Peter 1. Human promises can be unreliable. Also, we often feel that until the promise is fulfilled, we have not received anything. However, God's promises are a declaration of absolute certainty. The God of the universe does not lie. We must have the absolute confidence that God has promised us power and purpose on this earth as well as an eternity with Him in Heaven. Possessing these promises has already given us the right and the blessing to participate in the divine nature. The renewing of our mind and focusing on Christ and His truth transform us. Our goal is to be transformed to the glory of the Lord. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:18

### **Reward of a faithful life.**

When God called Elijah home to Heaven, Elijah was encouraging and instructing Elisha about the kingdom of God among men. When Elijah was caught up in the Heavens, he left behind his mantle, a symbol of divine power, for Elisha to use to glorify God and combat evil. Jesus also ascended into Heaven, leaving the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel, which has the power for salvation. Jesus spent His last evening with His disciples instructing and demonstrating service and love. How will the Lord find us when He calls us home? Will He find us living out the Great Commission, His last words to His disciples? Matthew 28:28-30. What spirit will be our mantle? "God did not give us a spirit of timidity (or fear) but a spirit of power, of love and self discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7. Elijah is our example of being transformed from fear and cowardice to a purpose driven, God transformed life. His reward for standing on the promises of God was to be transported to God, without death. We, who stand on the promises of God, will be victorious in this life and be with our Lord for eternity!

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