

## **DEFEATING DISCOURAGEMENT, DEPRESSION AND LONELINESS**

(March 2010 – Beausejour Church – Pastor Chris Jordan)

### OPENING TEXT:

**“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for the next three and a half years! Then he prayed for rain, and down it poured. The grass turned green, and the crops began to grow again.”** (James 5:16b-18).

- The Bible tells us two things here about Elijah. First of all, he was man who prayed powerful prayers. But secondly, he was as human as we are. That’s encouraging!
- I like the fact that the heroes of the Bible had weaknesses and flaws that we can relate to.
- As powerful and mighty a man of God that Elijah was, he struggled with discouragement.
- An ad for Paxil (an anti-depressant) from Reader’s Digest (Feb. 2003): *“Depressed Mood, Loss of Interest, Sleep Problems, Difficulty Concentrating, and Restlessness.”* It concluded with: *“Life is too precious to let another day go by feeling not quite ‘yourself.’ And life can feel difficult all day.”*
- The world’s answer to depression is medication. God had another answer for Elijah.

### BACKGROUND TO THE STORY OF ELIJAH:

- 17:1 - Elijah told the wicked King Ahab that there would be no rain.  
- this drought was God’s judgment on him for leading the nation into immorality
- v.2-6 - the Lord provided for Elijah with food from ravens and water from a brook.
- v.7-24 - the Lord had a widow provide for Elijah, and he raised her son from the dead.
- 18:16-20 - Elijah had Ahab called the 450 Baal and 400 Asherah prophets to Mount Carmel
- v.21 - Elijah’s bold challenge: *“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him!”*
- 2.22-40 - God sent fire from Heaven on Elijah’s sacrifice, and they slew the false prophets  
- this was a major victory in his life!

### KEY TEXT:

“And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” (1 Kings 19:1-4).

- Look at what happened to this mighty man of God, right after his major victory:
  - Fear: “Elijah arose and ran for his life.”
  - Depression and discouragement: “Lord, take my life.”
  - Loneliness: “He himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness.”
- Just because we struggle with these things doesn’t mean we’re doing something wrong.

### DEFEATING DISCOURAGEMENT AND DEPRESSION: Calvin & Hobbes “Miller Time!”

- What do you do when you’re discouraged? Many people turn to drugs or alcohol

THE BIG IDEA: All people struggle with discouragement, depression or loneliness at different times in their lives. The story of Elijah gives us hope, encouragement and four keys to defeat discouragement and depression.

1. REST:

**“Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you. So he arose, and ate and drank.”** (1 Kings 19:5-8a).

- Even though we are called to do the work of the ministry and serve the Lord, this must be balanced out with seasons of rest and refreshing.
- One of the first simple keys to defeating **discouragement and depression** is to get enough rest and take care of our physical bodies.
- **“And Jesus said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.”** (Mark 6:31).

2. RECONNECT WITH THE LORD:

“and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. **9** And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” **10** So he said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” **11** Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; **12** and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.” (1 Kings 19:8b-12).

- An important key to defeating **discouragement and depression** is to maintain a right relationship with the Lord Jesus.
- When Elijah was struggling, the Lord called him back to the mountain of the Lord.

Practically speaking, **HOW** do we reconnect with the Lord?

1. Reading our Bibles. “My soul clings to the dust; **revive** me according to Your word” (Psalm 119:25). “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your **joy may be full.**” (John 15:11). Joy and revival come from the Word.
2. Spending time with Jesus in prayer. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest.**” (Matthew 11:28).
3. Confessing your sins. “Oh, what joy **for** those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what **joy** for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone... So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!” (Psalm 32:1-3,5,11).

4. Going to Church. “I was **glad** when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the Lord.” (Psalm 122:1).

### 3. RETURN TO YOUR KINGDOM MISSION:

“**13** So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, “*What are you doing here, Elijah?*” ... **15** Then the Lord said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. **16** Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.” (1 Kings 19:13,15-16).

- God asked Elijah: “What are you doing here?”
- God has a job for you! Get busy helping others – we are blessed to be a blessing.
- Jesus said, “**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.**” (John 4:34). *My food* = strength, joy, and fulfillment!
- What is our mission? “**I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.**” (Genesis 12:2). Blessed to be a blessing!

ILLUSTRATION: Dr. Karl Menninger, a famous American psychologist, was giving a lecture once on mental health. Someone asked him, “What would you advise a person to do if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?” Most people thought he would say, “Go see a psychologist right away.” But he didn’t. Much to everyone’s surprise, he replied, “Lock up your home, go across the street, find somebody in need, and help that person.” To overcome discouragement, “Don’t focus on yourself; get involved in the lives of others.”

### 4. RELATIONSHIPS:

“**19** So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. **20** And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” **21** So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.” (1 Kings 19:19-21).

- Elisha became Elijah’s assistant prophet. I’m glad I have an assistant pastor now!
- Everybody needs a buddy. There’s a joy in fellowship with other believers.
- Relationships are God’s answer to those who struggle with loneliness.
- God said: “**It is not good for man to be alone.**” (Genesis 2:18).
- “**Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.**” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).
- That’s why God has given us the church – to be a family to support one another!

CLOSING: Do you struggle with discouragement, depression or loneliness?

God’s Word gives us four keys to defeating those things: (1) Rest, (2) reconnect with the Lord, (3) return to your kingdom mission (helping others), and (4) focus on relationships.

PRAYER: For those who are discouraged, depressed or lonely.