

The Leader and Burnout

I KINGS 19: 1-18

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. **2**Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." **3**Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. **4**But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." **5**Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." **6**He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. **7**The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." **8**He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

9 At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" **10**He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." **11**He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking 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 sound of sheer silence. **13**When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" **14**He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." **15**Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. **16**Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. **17**Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. **18**Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."



Elijah has just seen a great victory and God's vindication over the supporters of Baal. Why is he suffering from depression?

How does God deal with Elijah in his depression?

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LEADING
EDGE

Idolatries On Two Mountains

Mount Carmel, with the people who worshiped the idol Baal. God gained a very public victory over this idolatry through raining down fire at the request of Elijah. Everyone that day knew that the LORD was God.

Mount Horeb, with Elijah who idolized the dramatic event. God gained a very private victory over Elijah's idolatry by coming, not in wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a small sound of sheer silence. Elijah was being obedient in the Mt. Carmel display, but he was trusting in the great display of God's power to save him, not in God himself. He was trusting in a specific picture of what salvation and hope would look like, not in the God who backed that hope. On Mt. Horeb that day, Elijah came to realize that God's power is bigger than any opposing force and he can indeed be trusted, even when ministry doesn't work out the way he expects.

HOW ARE WE TEMPTED TO TRUST IN SOME SPECIFIC PICTURE OF HOW GOD WORKS, RATHER THAN IN GOD HIMSELF?

- We take evangelistic risks with our friends, sensing God's call. Yet they don't respond the way they thought they would, so we get discouraged and doubt God's existence, power, or goodness.
- We take steps of faith to pray for healing for a friend based on a sense of promise from God, but in the short run it seems that the promise isn't kept, or no dramatic results come.
- We pay great sacrifices of time and money for the sake of a creative ministry outreach, expecting that God will honor these sacrifices and vindicate our priorities. When we experience costs we didn't anticipate (lower grades, our boss' disapproval at work) or when we fail to see the results we were expecting, we can get discouraged and even burned out.

WHEN ARE YOU MOST TEMPTED TO EXPERIENCE BURN-OUT OR MINISTRY DISCOURAGEMENT?

- ◆ After a missions trip
- ◆ After a hard talk with your parents
- ◆ After a loud discussion with non-believing friends about God
- ◆ After receiving a low evaluation or grade
- ◆ After a person in your small group decides to drop out

In these (and other) times, what is God's encouragement for you?

WHAT IS GOD'S MESSAGE FOR US WHEN WE EXPERIENCE BURNOUT OR DEPRESSION:

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God is with us and he has given us partners, to help and encourage us. God gives Elisha to Elijah as a partner, but still Elijah must take the initiative.

◆

as we think. God reminds us that we are not without his resources, help, and ultimate vindication. Our perception needs to change--we must see God larger and our problems smaller.

◆ God's work is sometimes

Just because we haven't seen people healed does not mean we haven't seen the power of God or experienced his grace and healing touch in our own lives. God calls us in the midst of the quiet to rely on him and to press ahead with his purpose for our life: to love him and love others.

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• God reminds Elijah that in fact he is NOT the only one left in Israel. God has been watching and paying attention, and he knows that 7000 have not bowed

to Baal. As a prophet, Elijah sees many things others do not, but even Elijah needs God's corrective lenses to see reality clearly. God is paying attention more closely than Elijah thinks.

Background to this story. Elijah wins the great battle of the gods on Mt. Carmel, calling down fire from heaven. After victory, he personally kills all the enemy prophets of Baal, then prays and ends the three-year drought. It had been a good day of ministry until....

SKETCHES of Leadership ● ● ● ● ●



Elijah has just seen a great victory and God's vindication over the supporters of Baal. Why is he suffering from depression?

- He feels alone
- He thought his faithfulness would yield different and more positive results
- Even after the powerful victory, Jezebel still has power to threaten his life (in his mind)
- Before, he could look forward to vindication on Mt. Carmel. Now, he has nothing to look forward to in ministry. This seems like the end. "I am no better than my [dead] ancestors": I am as good as dead.
- He doesn't doubt God's existence or power, but doubts God's goodness

God says, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God has been directing his movements for several years, but this visit to Horeb was Elijah's idea.

God was not in the flashy things (wind, earthquake, fire) but in small sound of silence. Elijah recognizes God's presence and God ministers to him.

How does God deal with Elijah in his depression?

- He doesn't say, "There, there, Elijah, you need to take a break from your ministry"
- Yet he is not impatient with Elijah. He loves Elijah.
- God demonstrates that he is not only in the flashy events, but he is in the silence.
- God gives Elijah something to do. He invites him back into his ministry, renewing his sense of vision. "Anoint kings who will accomplish my purposes."
- God gives Elijah a partner: Elisha. He will no longer be alone.

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▶ **We aren't alone.**
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▶ **Reality is not as bleak**
 as we think. God reminds us that we are not without his resources, help, and ultimate vindication. Our perception needs to change--we must see God larger and our problems smaller.

▶ God's work is sometimes **small and quiet.**
 Just because we haven't seen people healed does not mean we haven't seen the power of God or experienced his grace and healing touch in our own lives. God calls us in the midst of the quiet to rely on him and to press ahead with his purpose for our life: to love him and love others.