

When Being Down Gets Dangerous

FAMILY THEME: Depression and Anxiety

STUDY TEXT: 1 Kings 19; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:7; Revelation 21:4

November 18, 2018

1 Kings 19

Cry out to God in times of weakness, trusting Him to help. Have you, or anyone you know, ever felt like Elijah? James 5:17 says that all of us have a lot in common with Elijah. If Elijah could become depressed, anyone can become depressed. Interestingly, Elijah quit on God (1 Kings 19:4) and even prayed that God would kill him, which sounds suicidal. Yet, God did not quit on Elijah and He does not quit on us. What did God do with Elijah when he cried out to Him? First, He addressed his physical needs by having him get up and eat (1 Kings 19:5-8). Rather than preaching to Elijah by saying something like, "What is wrong with you! You are supposed to be a prophet of God." Instead, God asked Elijah open-ended questions like, "What are you doing, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9, 13). Though Elijah gave some bad answers that were not completely accurate (1 Kings 19:10, 14), these open questions did require Elijah to be active rather than passive. Eventually, God confronted Elijah and pointed out that his thoughts were incorrect (1 Kings 19:18). Elijah was not the only one serving God, there were 7,000 others who had not bowed to Baal. This would be like us pointing out the number of friends a person had who claimed he or she had no friends. God also directly coached Elijah on how to address the threat that triggered his depression (1 Kings 19:15-21). In essence God instructed Elijah to go back into the ministry (or to work or school) he ran from and to attack the problem one bite at a time. **Discussion:**

- What can we learn about anxiety and depression from this event from Elijah's life?
- Along with prayer and Bible reading, what other steps can be taken to help with anxiety and depression?

James 1:2-8

Focus on God's purposes rather than on anxiety when facing trials and difficulty. When we struggle with depression or anxiety (or disappointment or frustration) we must get our focus off of the stressor and onto our Savior. There are at least 170 places in Scripture where we find the phrase "fear not." As we encounter trials, we must use these Scriptures to combat our fears. It is a good idea to memorize and write these Scriptures down and at the moment one feels fear or depression to pull the Scripture out and read and meditate upon it. Specific passages for specific fears are best. Some that are especially helpful are Psalm 55:22; John 14:3, 27; Matthew 6:25-34; and Philippians 4:4-9. Of course, we need to focus on prayer as well. Sometimes it helps to personalize psalms and other Bible passages and make them our own. For example, one might pray Isaiah 41:10, 13. Take the word you and change it to your own name and pray it for yourself. In a way we can use the Word holistically to attack a problem. Jesus told us in Matthew 6 not to be anxious (Matthew 6:25, 27). But how do we gain courage? We look around us and see how God cares for the birds and the flowers (Matthew 6:26, 28). We remind ourselves if God cares for birds and flowers then He certainly cares for us. Then we change our focus by seeking Him and His kingdom (Matthew 6:33). We use the passage to get at our root thinking and to impact how we behave in our environment and relate to others. **Discussion:**

- Why would God not simply remove trials and difficulties from a believer?
- How does God use trials and difficulty to help us grow?

1 Peter 5:7; Revelation 21:4

Keep looking to and trusting Christ when struggling with anxiety or depression. We always do better coping with trials when we keep our eyes on Christ, knowing He cares for us. Consider the apostle Peter who seemed very anxious as he was walking on the sea. He did well when his eyes were on Christ, but not so well when he began to focus on the challenges around him (Matthew 14:29-30). Yet, when he cried out for Christ, He was there for him (Matthew 14:31). Though we utilize the wisdom God has given us to address the trials of life, it is also important to rest in the hope we have in Christ that He will get us through the trials no matter how difficult and devastating. **Discussion:**

- What do we know about Christ that can encourage us when struggling with anxiety or depression?
- What can we look forward to about Heaven that can encourage us when dealing with depression or anxiety?