

Overcoming the Problem of Discouragement 1 Kings 18-19

Introduction:

1. The great prophet Elijah had just won a mighty victory over 450 prophets of Baal in chapter 18.
2. In chapter 19, Elijah received a death threat from Jezebel (King Ahab's wife). She said, "In 24 hours, you'll be dead. I'll see to that!"
3. Elijah fled for his life into the wilderness (19:3), plopped himself under a tree, and asked the Lord to take away his life. 19:4
4. He didn't feel like his life was worth continuing. Elijah is the picture of a discouraged man. Eventually, Elijah overcame his battle with discouragement and continued to accomplish wonderful works for God.
5. There are many practical truths that we can learn from this portion of God's Word that will help us understand and overcome the problem of discouragement.

Three facts about discouragement

1. Good people battle discouragement. 18:46
 - Elijah was a man of faith, totally committed to God. Yet, he battled it.
 - It's easy to look down on someone else who is going through discouragement. "If they had faith, they wouldn't be this way."
2. Discouragement can come at the strangest times. 18:36-19:4
 - Elijah's came after a great victory. The higher up on the mountain you are, the easier it is to fall off. It can be a hard fall.
3. Discouragement can be disabling. 19:1-7
 - It can get ahold of you to where you don't feel like you can take another step. This is how Elijah was. It can put you in bed, and you can't get out. It is a terrible thing.

Three characteristics of discouragement

1. The loss of courage - 19:3a
 - Elijah just defeated a king and 450 prophets of Baal, but then he ran in fear from one mean woman.
 - There are times when you feel like you cannot face another problem. Problems you would have otherwise tackled head-on, instead you run and hide from them.
2. Withdrawing from others – 19:3-4
 - He left his servant and obviously didn't want anybody around him. He wanted to be left alone.
 - When loved ones withdraw, don't take it personally. Simply realize that they may be battling discouragement. Pray and intercede for them. Don't beat them down.

- Warning to parents: If your children or teens always want to be alone and are very withdrawn from everyone, beware. They may be battling discouragement.
3. A feeling of worthlessness – 19:4
- Have you ever heard people constantly criticizing themselves (I'm ugly, stupid, nobody likes me, etc.)?
 - In Christ you have much value and worth to the Lord. You are precious to Him!

Four causes of discouragement

1. Foes – 19:1-2
 - Satan can use people to discourage you. Beware of this and guard your own tongue. Proverbs 18:21
2. Fear – 19:3; cf. 2 Timothy 1:7
 - Fear is of Satan, and he can use it to discourage us. Many times we fear things that will never happen.
3. Fatigue – 19:5-7
 - Elijah was a man that was overworked, over-wrought, just plain physically exhausted, and emotionally drained. He probably hadn't eaten or slept in days. He collapsed under the tree and got a little snappy with God.
 - Physical exhaustion leads to discouragement. We say silly things when we get tired and hungry. Sometimes we say hurtful things.
 - If your husband comes home from work tired and beat down, this isn't the time to greet him at the door with a tool box and a "to do" list of jobs around the house.
 - If your wife has been up all night with the baby, the next morning isn't the time to announce that everybody in the family is going on an all-day fishing trip.
4. Frustration – 19:10
 - You can't seem to get any help from anybody. You feel like you're going at it alone, but others should be helping. They aren't carrying their share of the load.
 - It is easy to get frustrated, "I'm the only one that lifts a finger around here, the only one that cares how this house looks, the only one that works hard, the only one that is true and faithful, the only one that takes any pride in how the job turns out."
 - Of course, this kind of frustration inevitably leads to discouragement.

Four principles to prevent discouragement

1. Maintain a proper balance in your life.
 - Life may feel like it is out of control – work, eat, sleep, work, eat, sleep...
 - Can you relate to this? You must reorganize your life and make time for rest and relaxation with loved ones and friends.

- The angel didn't tell Elijah to hold an all night prayer vigil or read his Bible from cover to cover. The angel knew he needed some R & R.
 - Is the carpet at your house made of egg shells? Everybody is grouchy and snapping at each other. Why? It could simply be that family members are physically drained.
2. Take care of your body. cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
 - You only have one body. You must care for it. Your physical state will affect your mental, emotional, and spiritual state. Your diet and your sleeping habits are so crucial.
 - There is so much talk today about stress, depression, anxiety, hyperactivity, etc. Much of this could be corrected by making some simple lifestyle changes.
 - What you put into your body does affect you in other areas.
 3. Stay others-centered, not self-centered.
 - Elijah had an "I" problem (vs. 10). "I don't deserve this, I think I'll just give up, I don't think anybody understands, I never get anything I want, I was done wrong, etc."
 - Self-centeredness always leads to discouragement.
 4. Maintain an attitude of dependence on God. 19:7
 - When we start thinking we can do it and we can handle it, we will soon find out that the journey is too hard for us. We soon discover how much we need God!

Four things to remember when you are battling discouragement

1. God has not forgotten you. 19:5, 9, 13
 - Elijah tried to out-run Jezebel, but he couldn't out-run the love and grace of God.
 - Even though Elijah was running, God always knew right where he was and had His eye upon him – under a tree (vs. 5), in a cave (vs. 9, 13).
2. God cares. 19:5-18
 - When Elijah was saying ridiculous things, God simply put him to sleep and fed him. Do you know why? Because God cares. When nobody else cared for Elijah, and he really didn't want anybody to care, God cared.
3. God can still use you to win mighty victories in the future. 2 Kings 1
 - God didn't toss Elijah aside and say, "I'm through with you. If you are going to sit around and feel sorry for yourself, then I'm done with you." No, God still used him.
4. Allow God to use others to encourage you. 19:19-21
 - God knew Elijah needed a godly companion to prevent this in the future, so he sent Elisha to him, and Elisha ministered to him.
 - When you are discouraged, it is tempting to go off alone and close yourself off from everybody.
 - When others reach out to help you and encourage you, give them a chance. Everybody needs somebody. God saw that even the mighty prophet Elijah needed help. He needed somebody.

- Don't be afraid to open up to another person and say, "Hey, I'm discouraged. I need help!"