

LIFE OF ELIJAH DISCUSSION GUIDE #4

1 Kings 19:1-18

Overview

Read the following overview:

After God's grand display of power through Elijah, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel seek to kill him, and Elijah "was afraid...and ran for his life" (v. 3). Upon arriving in Beersheba, Elijah left his servant in town and went "a day's journey into the wilderness...and asked that he might die" (v. 4). In the wilderness, God met Elijah in powerful ways, first miraculously providing food for Elijah, and then speaking directly to him.

God's first words to Elijah are "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v. 9). Though it seems his trust in God ought to be high, he's run away and doesn't want to live. Elijah's response to God reveals that he feels alone, and that he believes he's the only Israelite truly seeking to follow God. God then asks Elijah to leave his cave and stand on the side of the mountain. Suddenly a great wind passes by Elijah, and then an earthquake, and then fire, but each time the writer says "the Lord was not in the [wind, earthquake, or fire]" (vv. 11-12). Finally, God shows up as a "low whisper" and speaks encouragement to Elijah (vv. 12-18).

This episode in Elijah's life is incredibly honest. If the man who called down fire from heaven can experience despair and depression, then we can too. But the way God interacts with Elijah in this passage ought to be so encouraging to us. God pursues Elijah, restores him in kindness, redirects him back into community, and reaffirms his calling. Something we learn about God in this scene is that he is faithful and his promises do not rise or fall on our successes or failures.

Scripture

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18 aloud together.

After reading, discuss: What stands out to you from this passage?

After discussing your initial observations, use the following questions to reflect on how this passage of Scripture applies to your everyday life.

Reflect Together

1. In this passage, Elijah quickly goes from spiritual mountaintop (calling down fire from heaven) to spiritual valley (wanting to die). What spiritual "mountaintops" and/or "valleys" have you experienced in your life?

2. God meets Elijah with grace and kindness, but he also redirects Elijah with truth. When you go through dark seasons, where do you turn first for guidance and direction? What would it look like practically for God's Word to be your foundation for guidance and direction?
3. The fact that God first provides sleep and food for Elijah reminds us that we are whole people — mind, emotions, bodies, souls. Have you ever considered that sleep and physical health are important to God? If God cares about these things, how does this inform our approach when we are emotionally exhausted?
4. *Christ Connection:* Read Philippians 3:8-12. Where are you currently trusting in your performance (or despairing in your lack of performance) instead of resting on God's grace? What would it look like to truly believe that Christ Jesus has "made [you] his own"?
5. Question for everyone: Where are you struggling right now? How does it change that struggle to know your relationship with God rests on his work and not yours?

Practice for the Week Ahead

Read the following practice for the week ahead:

Throughout our Life of Elijah series, we're encouraging our church to seek the Lord in quiet, hidden places like Elijah.

This week, plan to set aside 20 minutes or more at least 5 days a week just to be with the Lord. As you pray and engage with Scripture, use part of that time to bring your struggles and your sin to the Lord. Cry out to him honestly. Remind yourself of his grace and love.

End in Prayer

Depending on time, you might have one person pray or several.

Pray:

Thank God for his pursuit of us in our lowest places, and that his faithfulness does not rise or fall on our successes or failures.

Ask the Spirit to give each person honesty about where they are struggling, rest for weary bodies and minds, and a growing trust that they are held by grace and not by their own performance.