

**Destructive Emotions #5**  
**“Dealing with Depression”**  
1 Kings 19:1-13

**We are continuing the series entitled “Destructive Emotions” and today we are going to deal with depression.** The darkness of depression forms a deep, ugly pit that becomes a prison of paralyzing fear and indescribable loneliness. In fact, *depression* is the number one health problem in the world. **It has been called the common cold of emotional illness.** Everybody gets depressed from time to time. **Some people are depressed all the time.** The Bible tells us that we were created for the Light and the Father stands ready to set us free.

**As you read the Bible you find that even some of the great men of God got caught up into the trap of depression.** Elijah is an example.

**Elijah was a tremendous spokesman for God.** For years, he had been God's mouthpiece to the nation of Israel. **All kinds of miracles had taken place.** There was a spiritual awakening taking place in the nation from a nation that had been previously going after pagan idols and things like that.

**But there was one person who did not like Elijah and felt like he had too much influence.** That person was the queen of Israel by the name of Jezebel. I Kings 19:1 tells us that after a great miracle had happened **"Ahab (the king) told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done."** This information made her furious, and verse 2 says, **"Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow, I do not make your life like one of them."** She was saying, **"If I don't kill you within twenty-four hours, I am ready to kill myself."**

**Here is Elijah, who had been fearless for three years, and one woman threatens his life and he is overtaken by the spirit of fear and runs out to the edge of the desert and gets depressed.** Verse 3 says, **"Elijah was afraid and he ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah he left his servant there while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree and sat down under it and prayed that he might die."** Here he is physically tired, emotionally exhausted, and filled with fear, anger and guilt. He was an emotional fruit basket at this point. **And the result is that he became depressed.**

Now James 5:17 tells us that **"Elijah was a man just like us."** **What does that mean?** That means he had the same problems that we have. **And he had a problem with depression.**

**How do people get themselves in such an emotional mess?** The answer is **faulty thinking.** It is a fact that your emotions are caused by your thoughts. **If you**

**think in a negative way, you are going to feel in a negative way.** Your emotions are caused by how you interpret life. If you look at life from a negative viewpoint, you are going to develop some level of depression.

**Therefore, if you want to get rid of negative emotions, you have to change the way you think.** That's why Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks, so is he." Romans 12:2 tells us to be "transformed by the renewing of our mind." That is why the Bible says in Philippians 4:8-9, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." The Bible is simply teaching that if you want to change your emotions you have to change the way you think. That's why Jesus said in John 8:32, "When you know the truth, the truth will set you free." **It is a biblical fact, you can be free from depression.**

So, today, we are going to look at Elijah and see, one, why he got depressed, and two, how God cured it.

**First, why did Elijah get depressed?** He got depressed because he made three common mistakes.

Look at verse 3 says, "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life...he sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die." **What did he say?** He said, "Lord, I have had enough. Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." He said, "God, I'm fed up! I don't want to put up with it anymore. I'm wasting my life. I'm trying to be Your servant but nobody's doing what's right. I'm fed up. There's no use trying. I'm giving up."

**Elijah's first mistake is the same mistake we make when we get depressed.** We focus on our *feelings* rather than the *facts*. That always happens when we are depressed. **We focus on how we feel rather than reality.** Elijah felt like a failure. Because of one little incident, he got afraid and ran. **Then he allowed his feelings to take over his thinking.** Because he felt like a coward, he said, "I am such a coward. What am I doing running?" He felt like a failure so he said, "I must be a failure." In the world of psychology that is called "emotional reasoning" and it is wrong. It is the idea of "I feel it so it must be true."

**Unfortunately, this same emotional reasoning makes its way into the spiritual realm.** There are many Christians today struggling with their salvation because they don't "feel" saved. On the other side of that coin, there are many Christians trying to operate on some "feeling" instead of according to the Word of God. And they usually respond like this, "Well, I just know what I feel."

The truth of the matter is this: **if your feelings do not match up with the Word of God they are wrong!**

Elijah thought, "I feel so lousy. Here I've had all these victories and one little woman scares me! What am I doing? What a failure I am." **Now listen to this statement: just because you have failed does not make you a failure!** The Bible **does not say** for us to get in touch with your **feelings**, but get in touch with the **truth**. It is the truth that sets you free.

**Some of you are depressed this morning because you are living by your feelings instead of the promises of God.** You are thinking, "I feel overwhelmed and I feel hopeless, therefore the problem must be impossible to solve." You are thinking, "I feel like God is far away, therefore He must be mad at me." You are thinking, "I feel inadequate, therefore I must be worthless." None of those things are true, they are conclusions based on "emotional reasoning." God says, "Don't focus on your feelings. Focus on the facts." The Bible says, "The truth sets you free."

**Elijah's second mistake was comparing himself with others.** Listen to this conclusion, "Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors." Evidently, Elijah remembered how the children of Israel died in the wilderness because of their doubt and unbelief and he saw himself as no better.

**Now listen to this statement: When you start comparing yourself to other people, you are asking for trouble.** The Bible says over and over, "Don't do it! Don't compare yourself." Everybody is unique. **If you try to imitate other people and be like them, you are just going to get depressed.** Everybody's unique and the only person you can be is you. That's all God wants. **That's all He expects.** He wants you to be you, because He made you that way.

Elijah said, "I am no better than my ancestors." He was comparing himself and that made him more depressed.

**The third mistake Elijah made was exaggerating the negative.** Listen to what he said, "I am the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too." Because he was exaggerating the negative, he concluded that everybody was against him. **What was the result?** He throws himself a pity party.

**The fact was, everybody wasn't against him.** There was only one person, one woman and her threat was an empty threat. Look at her threat in verse 2, "Tomorrow I am going to kill you."

**If Jezebel had really intended to kill him, he wouldn't have sent a messenger to warn him, she would have killed him on the spot!** If Elijah had

just thought about it instead of listening to his feelings, he would have realized there as no way Jezebel would have killed him. If he had been a martyr that would have only increased his influence and probably caused a revolution in the country. It was just a threat.

She let him get away to the desert. Why? Because she wanted to expose this “man of God” as a coward in front of the nation. But because Elijah was following his feelings instead of his reasoning he could not think clearly.

Listen, when you are depressed and allowing your feelings to dominate your life, you always exaggerate the negative. Everything looks bad. Everybody is against you. What is happening? Your *thinking* is out of balance!

The truth of the matter is, Elijah wasn't the only one. In verse 18 God says, “Look. I have preserved seven thousand others in Israel who have not bowed to Baal or kissed him.” The problem is that when we focus only on ourselves, we cannot see the real picture!

When you allow fear and resentment and guilt and low self esteem and anger and loneliness and worry to dominate your thinking you are asking for depression.

How did God deal with Elijah's depression? Look at verses 11-13, “Go out and stand before me on the mountain, the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.” When God came to Elijah He didn't put him down. He didn't criticize him. He didn't condemn him. What he did was to remind Elijah that He was still in control.

Sometimes, the greatest thing that any of us can do is to get a fresh awareness of God's presence and power in our life. God said, “Elijah, I have something for you to see.” As Elijah stood there and God put on a fireworks show. First he did a wind, then he did an earthquake, then he did a fire. God was showing His tremendous power as a reminder to Elijah. The interesting thing is it says that God wasn't speaking to Elijah in any of those. What really got Elijah's attention was the still small voice, the gentle whisper. God simply reminded Elijah that He was still right there beside him.

If you are depressed, get your Bible and get alone with God and just let God love you. Let Him speak to you. Let Him meet your needs. Let yourself

**feel His presence.** That is the greatest anti-depressant there is. Get a fresh awareness of God's presence in your life.

**Last of all, let God give you a new purpose and a new direction for your life.** Look at verse 15, "The Lord came to Elijah and said, Go back the way you came and go to the desert of Damascus and when you get there here's what I want you to do." He said, "I want you to anoint ... this king, that king." **God gave him a new assignment.** He put him back to work.

**God gave Elijah a new job.** He said, "I am not through with you and the job that I am giving you is going to help people." When you are depressed you think, "How can God ever use me? I am such a failure. I keep blowing it. I keep making mistakes. I discourage myself. I disappoint myself. Surely I must be disappointing to God."

**You do not disappoint God.** He's not disappointed because He already knows what's going to happen. The Bible says in Psalms, "He knows our frame. It is dust." **In other words, He knows we're human.** He made us. He knows what makes us tick.

**Listen to me today, whatever you are going through, let God give you a new purpose and a new direction.** He is not through with you. So you blew it? **So you have made some dumb decisions and mistakes.** Big deal! God will pick you up and start you over. **Why would God do such a thing?** Because He loves you and has a plan for your life!!

If you have never been saved, why not come today?

**Everyone please stand for prayer.**

Father,

You know how I feel. Help me to have a new awareness of Your presence in my life. Take the control center of my life and guide me. Help me to see life the way You see it, not the way I see it. Give me a new purpose and direction for my life. Thank You for loving me. In Jesus' name. Amen.