

Stressed by My "Success"

Core Competency
Personal God
1 Kings 18-19

Core Competencies

Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- **Personal God**
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

Dear Friends,

Have you ever felt so worn out, worn down, or just plain stressed out that you didn't feel like you could even go on? If you've ever been there, or even close, then you're in good company. The person we will be looking at in Scripture this week (Elijah) was so worn down and discouraged that he just wanted it all to end—he was ready to die. Now that's low! I love that Scripture is full of real people—not phony, two-dimensional people who are nothing like us.

Let me encourage you as you study these passages this week that you allow God to minister to you—a very real person—just as He's ministered to real and normal people all along.

Right there with you,

Richard Gotthardt

Engaging Our Minds & Hearts

Day 1

Today's Passages: Hebrews 4:12-16, 1 Kings 16-19

This week we will spend most of our time just reading and observing the text of **1 Kings 16-19**. We want to see the context of what was going on with the kings and the people of Israel during this time of Elijah's life. We will also see how a personal God responds to Elijah in a time of great personal stress and despondency.

Begin your time today by reading **Hebrews 4:12-16**.

¹² For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Pray that God would use His Word to penetrate your mind and heart...that He would draw you to His throne of grace, so that you may receive mercy and find grace to help in your time of need. Now read through **1 Kings 16-19** in a couple of different translations just to get the overall picture and sequence of events. If you have internet capabilities, you can go to www.biblegateway.com to access a variety of versions. *The Message* provides a very easy to read and understandable version.

Day 2 and Day 3

Today's Passage: 1 Kings 16-19

Pray first!

We will spend the next two days re-reading and observing the basic facts and relationships of the main characters in 1 Kings 16-19. On a separate piece of paper record your observations about the following people mentioned in 1 Kings 16. Be sure and include any of God's dealings with or feelings towards any of these also.

Baasha, Ela, Zimri, Omri, Tibni, Ahab, and Jezebel

As you come to **1 Kings 17**, begin a timeline of events in Elijah's life. Be sure to include anything you learn about him personally as well as anything concerning his relationship with God.

As you read **1 Kings 18**, continue with your timeline of events in Elijah's life and add to your lists of information on the people listed above. Also begin a list about **Obadiah**, the **prophets of Baal**, and the **prophets of Asherah**.

As you read **1 Kings 19**, continue with your timeline of events in Elijah's life and any further information regarding Jezebel.

Make a separate list that contains God's provisions, dealings and instructions to Elijah.

Day 4

Today's Passage: 1 Kings 19

Pray first!

James 5:17 says that "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours." Elijah has just experienced one of the most remarkable events and signs of God's presence and power in his lifetime. At the pinnacle of this "mountain top experience" or "success," he is threatened by Jezebel.

Read through **1 Kings 19** one more time and closely look at and note Elijah's obvious emotional and physical response to Jezebel's threats. Summarize what you see.

Next summarize how God responds to Elijah. Note the various elements included.

Day 5

Are there times where you have just felt overwhelmed and totally stressed or burned out? Maybe that is how you would characterize your life right now.

This week, as you have seen how God dealt with Elijah at this incredibly stressful time in his life, did you see evidence of a personal God who is involved in and cares about our daily lives?

One of our Core Beliefs at Grace Community Church is in a personal God that is involved in and cares about our daily lives. The key verse for this belief is **Psalm 121**.

I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip— He who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all harm— He will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and *forevermore*.

The Assessment Statements that help us to evaluate our own personal growth in this area are:

1. I believe that God has a purpose for my life.
2. I believe that pain and suffering can often bring me closer to God.
3. I believe that God is actively involved in my life.
4. I believe that God enables me to do things I could not or would not otherwise do.

Read through the following devotional by Oswald Chambers.

Arise and Eat. 1 Kings 19:5.

The angel did not give Elijah a vision, or explain the Scriptures to him, or do anything remarkable; he told Elijah to do the most ordinary thing, viz., to get up and eat. If we were never depressed, we should not be alive; it is the nature of a crystal never to be depressed. A human being is capable of depression, otherwise there would be no capacity for exaltation. There are things that are calculated to depress, things that are of the nature of death; and in taking an estimate of yourself, always take into account the capacity for depression.

When the Spirit of God comes, He does not give us visions; He tells us to do the most ordinary things conceivable. Depression is apt to turn us away from the ordinary commonplace things of God's creation, but whenever God comes, the inspiration is to do the most natural simple things—the things we would never have imagined God was in, and as we do them, we find He is there. The inspiration which comes to us in this way is an initiative against depression. We have to do the next thing and to do it in the inspiration of God. If we do a thing in order to overcome depression, we deepen the depression; but if the Spirit of God makes us feel intuitively that we must do the thing, and we do it, the depression is gone. Immediately we arise and obey. We enter on a higher plane of life.¹

Perhaps you need to spend some time now alone with God and allow Him to minister to your needs and speak to your heart as only He can. Then you will be ready to once again praise Him and do those things that He sets before you.

¹Chambers, O. (1993, c1935). *My utmost for his highest : Selections for the year* (February 17). Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers.

1 Kings 18-19

The following extensive excerpt is from Harper's Bible Dictionary. It offers much background on the protagonist of this week's text, Elijah, an Israelite prophet in the times of kings Ahab and Ahaziah, during the first half of the ninth century B.C.

"Elijah is the protagonist of four stories in the book of Kings. [This week's text focuses on] the first story, 1 Kings 16:29-19:18, Elijah declared a drought to punish the nation for its idolatry. At this time, Elijah himself hid and miraculously survived the famine. The drought ended in a contest between Elijah and the Baal prophets: the god who would answer his prophet's call with fire from heaven would be vindicated as the true god. Elijah won, Yahweh was vindicated, and Elijah's Baalite antagonists were slaughtered. Pursued by Queen Jezebel who sought vengeance for her protégés, Elijah fled to Horeb, reported to the Lord, and was commanded to anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha, three new protagonists in the fight against Baal. This story, which is often considered one of the masterpieces of biblical narrative, was probably written in Judah during the reign of Manasseh, some two hundred years after the events portrayed. Its late composition is indicated by the adoption of a legend from Elisha's cycle (1 Kings 17:8-16, cf. 2 Kings 4:1-7), the adaptation of the royal annals of Samaria to the present plot (1 Kings 16:29-17:1, to which the end, 19:16-18, corresponds), the incorporation of Isaiah's concept of 'the remnant' (1 Kings 19:18) and the anachronistic detail about the persecution of prophets (1 Kings 18:4, 13, 22; 19:10, 14)."²

Most commentaries break the passage down to three sections. The following notes take the same format:

Elijah Returns (1 Kings 18:1-19)

- Elijah is the protagonist of the story and he is returning to speak to King Ahab as he has been instructed to tell him how to end the drought that is destroying the land. On his way to the king he meets up with Obadiah, the king's assistant who is a God-fearer.
- When Elijah finally meets with Ahab (vs. 17-19), Elijah points out that he has turned from Yahweh to serve the Baals. This indicates he was serving a multitude of foreign gods.

Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-46)

- Mt. Carmel is not a single mountain but a range of hills running inland from the Bay of Acre in a south-easterly direction for about 12 miles.³
- Note in verses 25-29 how Elijah builds the odds against himself.
- In Verse 27, Elijah taunts the priests of Baal with a racy and sarcastic comment asking them if their God is busy on the toilet. This would have been utterly shameful to a Hebrew audience.
- "Elijah's prayer in vv 36-37 with foremost "today," epitomizes the entire narrative as a demonstration that (1) Yahweh is truly God in Israel and (2) Elijah is his true servant."⁴

Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-18)

- After Elijah's great victory at Mount Carmel, we see another side of his character come out here. In this scene we see the humanly fallible and scared side of Elijah.
- Elijah flees to Beersheba, "the southernmost city of Judah. Elijah fled from the Northern Kingdom into the more friendly kingdom of Jehoshaphat. He went not merely to Judah proper but even 'to the end of civilization'—to Beersheba."⁵
- In verse 12, after an earthquake, a strong wind and other impressive events, the voice of the Lord comes to Elijah in the silence. Carson comments, "The translations a 'gentle whisper' and 'a still small voice' (RSV) do not do full justice to the enigmatic Hebrew expression, which may be better rendered 'a brief sound of silence.'"⁶

²Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. Includes index. (1st ed.). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

³Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The New Bible Commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (1 Ki 18:20). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

⁴DeVries, S. J. (2003). *Vol. 12: Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Kings*. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 226). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

⁵Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (1 Ki 19:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁶Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The New Bible Commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (1 Ki 19:19). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

What is helpful?
What could be better?
What is missing?
Is it helping you be more prepared for Sunday?

Send your feedback to
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