

Leader guide

In this lesson:

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 19

CORE VIRTUE: PATIENCE

Patience (Proverbs 14:29): I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

TAKE HOME TRUTH

Knowing God is 'here' and 'there' moves us to realize our fear is unfounded and revives us to worship and work for our gracious King.

For more resources related to this series visit www.ffcgroups.com

Our Gracious King



OVERVIEW

We ended 1 Kings 18 on a high note: fire rains from heaven destroying the 850 prophets of Baal. The fervent prayer of a lone man brings precious rain, ending a 3-1/2 year drought. Revival is breaking out in the land. God's people turn from their wicked ways and cry out to the God of Israel.

God is good. Life is good. It is time for rejoicing!

Unfortunately, not everyone saw this as a time of revival in Israel. 1 Kings 19 opens with King Ahab telling his wife, Jezebel, what had just happened on Mt. Carmel.

Can you imagine that conversation?

"Uh, honey, I've got some good news."

"What?"

"It's starting to rain. The drought is over. Also, all the prophets of Baal are dead. What time is dinner? I thought we'd go to Naboth's Vineyard for supper. I know you like their Chicken Cacciatore with their house Merlot."

Forget dinner a Naboth's. This is not going to be a good night for King Ahab. Jezebel is enraged. Before Ahab can reach out to take her hand, she summons a messenger with a simple note to Elijah: You're dead.

Wow, talk about a sudden crash. Elijah goes from the exuberance of Mt. Carmel to a sentence of death, all within a short time.

Fearing for his life, Elijah became the model for Forrest Gump and he just ran. When he got to the edge of Jezreel, he kept going. When he got to Samaria, he kept going. Elijah ran clear across Israel until he came to Beersheba, and when he reached Beersheba, he kept going until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. When he arrived at Horeb, he said, "I'm pretty tired, I think I'll stop now." (The Bible doesn't really say that.)

And that's where we find Elijah this week. He is tired, overwhelmed, and depressed. He's found a cave, crawled inside, and falls asleep. In this dark season in Elijah's life, even though he wanted to die, the Lord came to Elijah in the cave and encouraged him.

How does the Lord encourage us when we find ourselves discouraged or depressed and hiding in a cave? That's what we will look at this week as we study 1 Kings 19.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Psalms 42:5 - "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

INTRODUCTION

When has silence been golden to you?

What things in life tend to discourage you the most?

Looking back at your notes from this week's sermon, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

Make sure you ask this question this week. It gives people the opportunity to discuss questions or issues that come up beyond the written questions. People's responses can often lead into one of the questions in the "Digging Deeper" section. Also, some weeks this question will result in a lot of discussion, other weeks, not so much.

READ THE TEXT

Elijah had just experienced a great victory over the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40). Elijah then predicted the coming rain after a long drought, and God responded with rain (vv. 41-46). But when Elijah was threatened, he became discouraged and afraid—in spite of God's presence and power in those great victories. Read 1 Kings 19:1-18.

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

that Baal did not exist and should not be worshiped. Elijah probably expected to return to Jezreel as a victorious prophet. Jezebel’s message crushed his joyful celebration.

19:3. Elijah responded to Jezebel’s threat with fear and ran for his life. Elijah’s flight might have indicated a lack of strength to continue the fight against Baalism and Jezebel or a lack of faith in God’s ability to protect him from Jezebel. His victory had turned into defeat.

Many characters in the Bible experienced fear, including Abraham (Gen. 26:7), Jacob (32:11), Joshua (Jos. 8:1), and Peter (Gal. 2:12). We also face fear and sometimes, as Elijah, we seek to escape from frightening situations. When we allow threats to intimidate our faith, we cannot see how God can help us; fear then can overwhelm us.

Elijah traveled south through Israel and Judah and arrived at Beersheba (bee ehr SHEE buh), the southernmost boundary of Judah. There Elijah left his servant, probably the same young man who had reported to Elijah on the status of the gathering rain clouds (1 Kings 18:43-44). Elijah’s dismissal of his servant indicated his intention to abandon his prophetic ministry. He would no longer need a servant.

19:4. Alone, Elijah traveled another day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, a small shrub, and sought shelter in its meager shade. Elijah prayed that he might die. He had had enough of standing alone for God. He had grown tired of facing one enemy of God after another. He believed his service for God had been in vain. He, as his ancestors, had failed to lead Israel to a permanent commitment to the Lord. In his depressed state, death seemed the best alternative.

Sometimes we may think biblical figures did not experience the same problems we do. James’s statement that Elijah was like us emphasizes Elijah’s humanity (Jas. 5:17). It shows, however, that God can use us ordinary people in wonderful ways as he used Elijah. Abraham, Moses, David, and Elijah were not superhuman. They wrestled with temptation, experienced failure, felt fear, and struggled with depression, even as all of us do at times.

19:5. The past three years in Elijah’s life had been trying and exhausting. As a known opponent of Baal, he topped Ahab and Jezebel’s list of troublemakers (1 Kings 18:17). Although God had miraculously provided nourishment for him (17:6,15-16), he had watched his people suffer through the drought and still not repent and trust in the Lord. God’s impressive victory on Mount Carmel had filled Elijah with joy and confidence, but that evaporated with Jezebel’s threat. Within a short time he had journeyed approximately 100 miles, passing beyond the boundary of Judah and into the wilderness.

Physical, mental, and spiritual exhaustion finally caught up with Elijah. He lay down under the shrub’s shade and fell asleep. Believers are not immune to exhaustion and depression. Sometimes we exhaust ourselves through Christian service, spending all our time ministering to others without spending enough time with God and at rest. At other times the demands and stresses of life can take their toll. With no physical energy to face or complete tasks, we can despair of ever getting them done. With no mental energy, we cannot think clearly and can become discouraged when we cannot make sound decisions. With no spiritual energy, we lose sight of our divine source of strength.

In Elijah’s time of need, God provided for him. God sent an angel who touched Elijah and told him to get up and eat. As God miraculously had cared for Elijah earlier (17:6,15-16), so He did again.

19:6. Elijah roused from his sleep and saw a freshly baked cake of bread and a jar of water. God provided the basic necessities for His servant. Elijah

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

