



# Coping with Depression

May 15-21, 2022

## **MAIN POINT**

In the midst of depression, we must turn to God and look to Him as our Provider and our Savior.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Define depression. What are the varying ways the term is used today?

Have you ever felt depressed or struggled with depression? What is it like?

What does it look like to struggle with a spiritual depression?

The term depression can range in meaning from a serious medical issue to someone having a bad day. Treatments for genuine depression vary from medication to talk therapy. For the believer, one's relationship with God plays a crucial role. Today's study demonstrates that In the midst of depression, we must turn to God and look to Him as our Provider and our Savior.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

**READ [1 KINGS 19:1-8](#).**

What did Jezebel say that she would do to Elijah? How did Elijah respond to her threat?

Have you ever come to a point of loneliness and depression where you have approached God like Elijah? Explain.

How should the people of God deal with loneliness and depression? What are some of the complexities that accompany this issue?

Sometimes we may think biblical figures did not experience the same problems we do. 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. It shows, however, that God can use us ordinary people in wonderful ways, just as He used Elijah.

How did God respond to Elijah? What did He provide?

How might God use loneliness and depression to speak into our lives? What can we learn about God and ourselves when we are depressed? How does going through such an experience form us into being more like Jesus?

**READ [1 KINGS 19:9-18](#).**

What did Elijah tell God was the reason he was depressed?

Describe the progression events as Elijah stood on the mountain before God.

Why wasn't God in the wind or the earthquake or the fire?

Why do you think God came in a whisper? What did God ask Elijah?

How would you describe the way God felt towards Elijah in that moment?

**READ [PSALM 43:1-5](#).**

Our world offers every type of refuge imaginable, but the psalmist says in verse 2 that he turns to God for his refuge.

Where are some places we turn for refuge other than God? Why do these ultimately fail?

The psalmist loved God and made his longing to worship Him known. Unbelievers around him taunted him, adding to his misery. Yet, in the end, he overcame despair and expressed confidence in the Lord as his Savior and his God. Only when we have confidence in the Lord and place our hope in Him can we overcome the challenging and threatening situations we find ourselves in. When tempted to fall into despair, believers can discipline themselves to hope in God. Hope is an act of the will.

What truths was the psalmist clinging to in the continued turmoil he was experiencing?

Where did the psalmist claim to find his greatest joy?

**APPLICATION**

What are some practical ways you can remind yourself of who God is?

How can remembering how He has loved you in the past help when you experience times of adversity in the future? What are some practical ways you can remember His love?

How can we, as a group, help one another in these ways?

**PRAYER**

Pray that God would care and comfort the people who are currently struggling with depression. Pray that God would show them His love and grace. Pray that people would trust in God even in the difficult times. Ask that God would lead people down the path of healing.

**COMMENTARY**

**1 KINGS 19:1-18**

**19:1.** Once King Ahab arrived in Jezreel, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done. He recounted Elijah's proposal, the failure of Baal to respond to the prayers of his prophets, God's incredible display of power, the people's response, and the slaughter of all the prophets of Baal. Jezebel could look outside and see Elijah's prophecy of rain also had come true.

**19:2.** Hearing Ahab's account, Jezebel viewed Elijah's action as a vicious attack on her god Baal, something she refused to tolerate. She sent a messenger to Elijah, vowing he would die as had the prophets of Baal. As Elijah ran to Jezreel ([18:46](#)), he must have been overjoyed at God's great victory over Baal. The people had recognized the Lord as Victor and had acclaimed Him as their God ([18:39](#)). Surely Ahab also had been convinced 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 ([Genesis 26:7](#)), Jacob ([32:11](#)), Joshua ([Joshua 8:1](#)), and Peter ([Galatians 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 ([James 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 did not awaken to find a multicourse meal, a freshly drawn bath, and a warm bed. Elijah awoke to find hope. In the last few days, Jezebel's threat and the apparent ineffectiveness of his ministry had overwhelmed and depressed him. Now he realized God had not given up on him. The food and water brought hope but did not cure his exhaustion or depression. After eating and drinking, he lay down again.

**19:9.** God, who had spoken to Moses and Israel at Horeb centuries before, spoke to Elijah. He asked Elijah what he was doing at Horeb. While we might think God spoke to Elijah in a stern, accusing manner, He probably did not. God knew what Elijah had been through. Out of His great compassion, God encouraged Elijah to tell Him exactly what he was thinking. Of course, God knew.

**19:10.** Elijah held nothing back. He told the Lord he had been very zealous for Him. By contrast, the Israelites had rejected God's covenant, destroyed altars dedicated to the worship of God, and killed God's prophets. Elijah thought he alone remained of all God's prophets, and Jezebel had turned her full attention to killing him too. As Elijah reflected on his ministry, he could see nothing but a great investment of time and commitment for God that had produced little results.

**19:11-13.** God first reveals His presence to Elijah in His greatness and power, but He did not speak from that position. The Lord instead spoke to Elijah in a soft whisper, showing Himself to be a God who communicates via a still, small voice as well as powerful displays.

**19:15-16.** God's commands first pointed to judgment. Elijah was to anoint Hazael as king over Aram, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as his own successor. God was still controlling events.

**19:17.** This command indicated the extent of God's judgment—death at the hands of Hazael, death at the hands of Jehu, and death even at the hands of Elisha through His pronouncements of judgment.

**19:18.** The second part of God's response gave hope. God still had 7,000 people through whom He could work in the future.