

DEPRESSION
The Depths of Despair!

by Pastor Ron Isam
Copyright © May 21, 2020

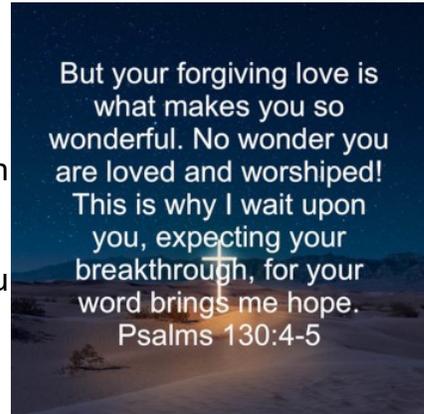
Preface

This anointed publication is a wonderful picture of the human life as we walk at times in great victory, and at other times in deep defeat. The issues of depression are a huge subject. If you or someone you know struggles with depression, even if they don't know they do, help them get connected to this message. For this publication tries to give you a powerful healing biblical look at this issue that is so prevalent in our modern society.

Johnny J. Fowler Jr.

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 1]

The issues of depression are a huge subject. In this series of writing I am going to try to give you a biblical look at this issue that is so prevalent in our modern society. There is everything from being down in the dumps to full-fledged clinical depression. If you have never experienced true depression then you may be one of those people who may have a tendency to tell people with depression to “pull up your boot-straps and get going!” For someone who has had true depression I can tell you that using that bit of human wisdom is maybe the worst thing you could actually say to someone truly walking in depression.



Back many years ago I hit this depth of despair. It was a horrible time, in my journey, to hit this depression. Honestly, I didn't know that it was actually depression. I told myself to “pull up my bootstraps...” but the honest truth was that I couldn't. I was serving as a pastor in a growing church and also overseeing youth ministry of churches in 5 states. Actually God was moving and using my gift to touch a lot of people. I was young and I thought I could take on the world.

There was a young lady in our church that was an RN. She came to me privately, and asked me when the last time I had gone to a doctor for a full physical. See, she could see the signs of depression in me even though I had no idea what I was experiencing. She recommended a doctor for me to go to and I took her up on it, just to be nice, because I didn't think there was anything wrong, at that time. I went to the appointment and this doctor listened to me for a bit, and then he checked me over pretty thoroughly. Then he said a few things that started me to a changed life. First he said, “you have a chemical imbalance or a depression.” I thought he was nuts, but I really liked the doctor, and so I decided to listen. Over the next hour he began to read my mail. I am telling you that there was no way he could have known some things I had been thinking, because I had told no one. Come to find out, he was a pastor's son, he had been a psychiatrist for many years, but it was taking him away from his family too much, so he went back to med school and had become an internist.

The next thing he told me was the hardest thing anyone has ever said to me. He said “Ron, I will not be your friend until you are well.” Listen, everyone was my friend and I loved people a lot and longed for friendship, so for this doctor to say this set me back on my heels. I remember during that season, I was traveling a lot and while an airplane rides, I would pray that God would cause the plane to crash, so I could die, but not anyone else would get hurt. This doctor told me about those thoughts almost word for word how I had thought and prayed it. There were many other thoughts like that, in which he told me I had. I was embarrassed that I had thought them, but I was horrified that another human being knew I was thinking things like that. However, there was no way I could overlook this man who wanted, so much, to help me.

Another thing he told me was that I would be the last person to know I was depressed and I would be the last to know I was through the journey. Over the months this man did a lot of things to help me, in my body, but also in my thinking. I will never forget one day when he

walked into the exam room, many months after we started this process, and he said these words. "How are you doing today, my friend." It felt like a bomb went off in my head when I heard those words. Then he explained to me, that he could not help me as a friend, he had to be my doctor, but when he said those words, I knew I had made the journey and that I was on my way to total freedom from this horrible depression.

I tell my story because I think it helps me have a bit of a right to speak to you about this subject. In the coming weeks, I will share with you causes and symptoms of depression and how to respond and recover from this thing called depression. If you or someone you know struggles with depression, even if they don't know they do, help them get connected to these posts. I believe it will help you or them through this journey to healing. Let me leave you with a Psalm that describes this depth of despair.

Psalm 130:1-8 (TPT)

A song of the stairway

1 Lord, I cry out to you out of the depths of my despair!

2 Hear my voice, O God! Answer this prayer and hear my plea for mercy.

3 Lord, if you measured us and marked us with our sins, who would ever have their prayers answered?

4 But your forgiving love is what makes you so wonderful. No wonder you are loved and worshiped!

5 This is why I wait upon you, expecting your breakthrough, for your word brings me hope.

6 I long for you more than any watchman would long for the morning light. I will watch and wait for you, O God, throughout the night.

7 O Israel, keep hoping, keep trusting, and keep waiting on the Lord, for he is tenderhearted, kind, and forgiving. He has a thousand ways to set you free!

8 He himself will redeem you; he will ransom you from the cruel slavery of your sins!

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 2]

I am sure many wonder why I might be writing about depression right now. First, I am writing about this huge subject because so many people struggle from many different levels of it. Secondly, I think that almost everyone knows people that struggle with it and would like to be a positive help to someone going through it. Lastly, we are hopefully coming out of a time that our modern society has never experienced. To be “locked down” or under a “safer at home” order is not something we are accustomed too in our day and time. The closest time to this was about 100 years ago. This has caused a lot of people to experience a certain kind of depression.



At times everyone feels sad, or down in the dumps, others feel blue. Solomon wrote:

Ecclesiastes 3:4 (NKJV)

“A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance;”

The writer to the Hebrews helps us understand that we will have times of need in our lives.

Hebrews 4:16 (TPT)

“So now we come freely and boldly to where love is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness.”

Depression is a deeper level of emotional pain and affects people in many different ways. According to some research, nearly one person out of every five people experience a significant and sometimes tenacious depression. This can cause people to miss more work than a disease like diabetes or even heart disease. Depression can make people more susceptible to the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

This thing we call depression not only affects the person who is depressed but it can impact deeply the lives of their family even coworkers and anyone who's in regular contact with the depressed person. It is clear that depression is a major concern for many people.

What causes depression: There are many things that can be a factor in the cause of depression. Stress, being lonely, feeling guilt, fear and anger. David the Psalmist, wrote that unconfessed sin played a major role in his depression. It led to a groaning in his soul, and even a loss of strength. Take a look at Psalm 38. Take a look at the whole chapter, but the first 8 verses really hits at describing depression.

Psalm 38:1-8 (TPT)

“My inner being is shriveled up; my self-confidence crushed. Sick with fever, I'm left exhausted. Now I'm cold as a corpse and nothing is left inside me but great groaning filled with anguish. O Lord, don't punish me angrily for what I've done. Don't let my sin inflame your wrath against me. For the arrows of your conviction

have pierced me deeply. Your blows have struck my soul and crushed me. Now my body is sick. My health is totally broken because of your anger, and it's all due to my sins! I'm overwhelmed, swamped, and submerged beneath the heavy burden of my guilt. It clings to me and won't let me go. My rotting wounds are a witness against me. They are severe and getting worse, reminding me of my failure and folly. I am completely broken because of what I've done. Gloom is all around me. My sins have bent me over to the ground."

David was truly feeling it here in this chapter. Many counselors won't bring this up because we often overlook the depth of the pain caused by unconfessed sin. God used depression as a signal to get attention of Nehemiah to go and do his work. Look at Nehemiah 1:2-4. In this case the translation refers it too mourning, but this was not the kind of mourning one experienced just at the death of someone. This was a warning signal to Nehemiah that the work of God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that we read about both in Ezra and Nehemiah, was in jeopardy because the people were in "great trouble and disgrace." The walls had been torn down and the gates had been destroyed by fire. This caused Nehemiah to feel distressed and "he sat down and mourned, fasted and prayed to the God of heaven." By reading this first chapter we see this powerful prayer of confession, and then read the change after being before the Lord.

Nehemiah 1:10-11 (NLT). (found at the end of this prayer.)

"The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me." In those days I was the king's cup-bearer."

Job was another man in the Bible that dealt with situational depression. He had experienced great losses financially, personally, and relationally that brought him to curse the very day he was born. Read about this in Job chapter 1-3.

Even Elijah, the great Prophet dealt with depression. He experienced this depression right after a great victory. His depression was so deep he wanted to die.

1 Kings 19:4 (NLT)

"Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.""

Ouch, take a quick read through 1 Kings 18 and great victory when Elijah called down fire from heaven, then he prayed and God brought rain after it hadn't rained for 3 1/2 years at the command of Elijah. He even outran the chariots to the city. I would call that amazing, and then see him in the very next chapter under a "broom tree" wanting to die. Thankfully, the story doesn't end there. God gave him food, he traveled for 4 days and 4 nights to a cave, and it was in the cave that God spoke to him in "a still small voice." However, before God spoke to him in that still small voice, catch the words God speaks to Him to prepare him.

1 Kings 19:9-10 (NLT)

"There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him,

“What are you doing here, Elijah?” Elijah replied, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.””

Go ahead now and open your Bible to [1 Kings 19:11-18](#). It is worth the read to see how God brought this man out of depression into a man of great purpose and at the end of God’s direction he reminded Elijah that “there were 7000 people in Israel who have never bowed to Baal (a false god) or kissed him.” Listen, when we feel alone there is always a remnant of people God has on this earth that have stayed strong in their journey with God.

In the part 3, I will finish the rest of these causes of depression and then begin giving you some symptoms of depression. I hope you are learning something while you are reading this. I spend a lot of my time in my counseling office talking to people at every stage of depression and I have experienced it myself. It is real, but we do not have to stay depressed there is true freedom after depression.

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 3]

In part 2 we were giving some causes of depression. We will finish in this part, and I will begin giving you some symptoms of depression.

Although environmental issues such as work, stress, family and other relationships can add to depression, there are actually a number of physical or medical factors that are involved as well. These can include things like thyroid issues, fluctuations in hormones in women, or diabetes is known to affect people in depression. Nutritional shortages leading to B-12 or iron shortages has been said can cause sadness. I have read that people with a recent stroke or heart attack can be at a high risk of depression. I am not saying that everyone with these issues will be depressed but evidently they can affect the chemicals in our body and bring on a chemical imbalance. (a little more about this in a moment.)



Another list of causes that have been found to add to or cause depression is some common prescription drugs such as: anti-hypertensive drugs, some oral contraceptives, also recreational drugs, alcohol, cocaine, has been shown to cause some significant levels of depression.

Abnormalities in the brain's management of hormones such as serotonin and norepinephrine can also bring on sometimes overwhelming feelings of doom and gloom. Understanding these physical components that have been known to cause depression can help to put this disorder into context and give some idea how widespread this is.

Let me make sure you know, that I am not a doctor and I do not know more than I have read about these things. Therefore, if you feel you may be dealing with depression or any similar things, then please make an appointment with your doctor and allow them to check you personally and hear your story, and they can tell if something is out of balance in these chemicals. They can tell whether it is environmental or related to your circumstances. All of these things can be very real and can cause intense depression. Things that do not bother one person can be a life changer for another. Please, do not try to navigate this all by yourself.

Some Symptoms of Depression

As we begin to look at symptoms of depression, let's get back to the scripture because that is what I understand a little better than the chemical things. Psalm 102 provides a very real checklist of symptoms that King David experienced during a particular stressful period during his life.

Psalm 102:1-2 (TPT)

A prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring out problems before the Lord.

Lord, listen to my prayer! Listen to my cry for help! You can't hide your face from me in the day of my distress. Stoop down to hear my prayer and answer me quickly, Lord!

He wrote this from the place of feeling stricken physically and describes losing the meaning and purpose for his life.

Psalm 102:3-4 (TPT)

For my days of happiness have gone up in smoke. My body is raging with fever, my heart is sick, and I'm consumed by this illness—withered like a dead leaf. I can't even eat.

He says this happiness has gone up like the smoke. He physically feels like he has a fever. It is not so much the depression always causes a person to be physically ill, but it is very possible that we can feel real physical pain or illness with depression. When the doctor says there is nothing wrong with you, then it makes others think that we are faking. Always present all that you are feeling with your doctor, not just the physical things.

He lost his appetite. "I can't even eat." This is a common sign of depression. For some it can be the opposite. They even try to make themselves feel better by eating, some even gain a lot of weight which brings on added depression. However, I would say that it is much more common to be like David and can't even make themselves eat.

Psalm 102:5-7 (TPT)

I'm nothing but skin and bones. Nothing's left of me but whispered groans. I'm depressed, lonely, forgotten, and abandoned. I'm sleepless, shivering in the cold, forlorn and friendless, like a lonely bird on the rooftop.

David describes several symptoms of depression in these verses. He describes himself as "skin and bones." This is obviously from not eating in (verse 4). Then he describes feeling that there is nothing left in me except "whispered groans." Maybe coming from crying and groaning in despair. Then he gives us a major list of signs of depression:

First, he admits he is "depressed, then lonely, forgotten, and abandoned." He goes on to describe himself as "sleepless, cold, forlorn (which means sad or lonely because of isolation or desertion.) friendless, like a lonely bird on a rooftop."

I will assure you that this describes just how I felt when I was going through the time of depression I described in the first part of this writing.

Psalm 102:8-10 (TPT)

My every enemy mocks and insults me incessantly. They even use my name as a curse to speak over others! Because of your great and furious anger against me all I do is suffer with sorrow, with nothing to eat but a meal of mourning. My crying fills my cup with salty tears! In your wrath you have rejected me, sweeping me away like dirt on the floor.

This last 3 verses shows the absolute lowest part of depression. It is in this stage that we even seem to forget the truth, and we begin to exchange the truth for a lie. Depression is powerful and that is why we need help for going through it. We not only need to have someone that knows us well enough who can recognize when it is coming on and will know when it has finished its course.

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 4]

In this part we will continue sharing about the Symptoms of Depression. I started this in part 3, so you may want to start there if you didn't read it yet.

Serious depression can present itself in many ways. When the symptoms that I gave in part 3 of this series are expressed in a way that is very dramatic, or in a way that seems to be disabling for longer periods of time, (such as for weeks and/or months) at a time this is normally called a "major depression." When these symptoms are presented in a what is commonly described as a chronic way, such as occurring again and again for a long time, this is most commonly referred to as "dysthymic disorder" or "Chronic depression."

This can become very complicated here. If you Google those words at the end of the last paragraph, you can read for days about this and if you are like me you will find yourself more and more confused, with seconds of understanding and hours of feeling irritable and then seconds of euphoria, then hours of insomnia and being agitated. If you are not chuckling right now then you are most likely very frustrated with me. Why, because this subject of depression can cause a "bipolar disorder" or "manic depressive illness" because it sometimes makes sense and sometimes doesn't make any sense at all. That is why we can learn more from reading David's incredible words or looking from the life of Elijah on the mountains or in the valleys than we will probably will ever understand from psychology 101.

We must just take a few moments and look at how to Respond to Depression, from these great stories of the Bible. Elijah responded in both a healthy and unhealthy way to depression. Take a moment to read 1 Kings 18 & 19 for a moment and you will see how this incredible man of God, at the top of his game, responded to depression.

He has a reluctant servant named Obadiah. Who is scared to go tell Ahab that Elijah was still alive because he was supposed to kill the prophets of God, but he didn't do it.

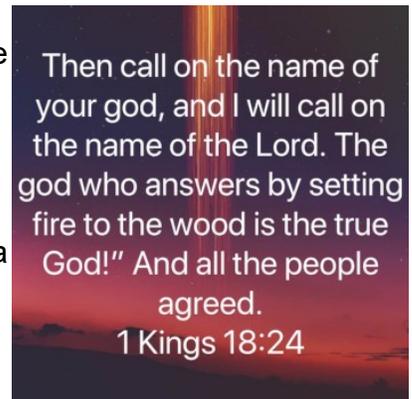
Here is the showdown:

He is going take on King Ahab (who thinks that Elijah is a troublemaker) and a Queen Jezebel who were wicked in the eyes of God. Elijah calls the king and queen out as the true troublemakers.

1 Kings 18:18 (NLT)

"I have made no trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the Lord and have worshiped the images of Baal instead."

Then Elijah makes this invitation to Ahab and Jezebel:



1 Kings 18:19 (NLT)

"Now summon all Israel to join me at Mount Carmel, along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who are supported by Jezebel."

1 Kings 18:20-21 (NLT)

So Ahab summoned all the people of Israel and the prophets to Mount Carmel. Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent.

So, here they are the 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah — Ahab & Jezebel, the people of Israel who are a double-minded people on one side, and Elijah on the other. Elijah asks them which side they are going to choose. Then he calls them out.

He says to the 850 prophets to make an altar, and he says he will make an altar. He challenged them to get a bull, and he would get a bull. Then they were to build their altar, and he even gives these prophets first choice of a bull. Then he said he would lay his bull out on the altar of God, right up on the top of Mount Carmel and the God who answers with fire from heaven would be the God that Israel would follow.

So, he allows the 850 prophets to go first. They are crying out, cutting themselves, and doing all kinds of crazy thing. At noon Elijah begins to tease them. Saying their god has gone on a trip, even one time talking about Baal as having his feet covered which is a nice way of saying that he is going to the bathroom. Then it came time for the evening sacrifice and then it was Elijah's time to pray to the God of heaven. Baal has not answered so Elijah doesn't have much to lose but something big happens when Elijah begins his time to sacrifice the bull to God...

In the part 5, we will see what happens. If you know the story you may not be surprised but if you don't know the story then you will find out. We will see how Elijah responds to depression in a good way and how he then will respond in a not such a good way. Blessings!

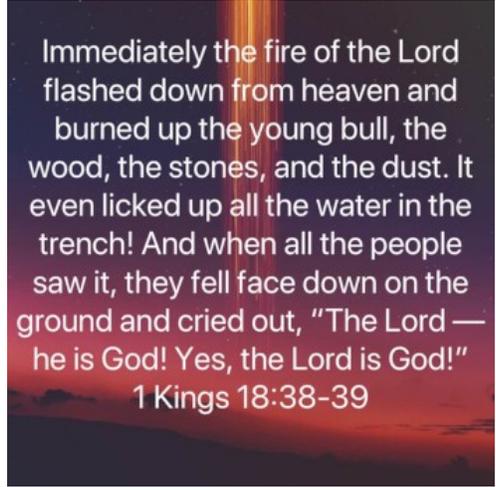
Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 5]

If you didn't read part 4 yesterday then, I would suggest you read it first! That way you will be caught up to the story we are finishing today!

So, we are in 1 Kings 18 — Elijah has asked the most pertinent question that has ever been asked? "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? (verse 21) In other words, look at this same question basically in:

James 1:6-8 (NIV)

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.



Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench! And when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, "The Lord — he is God! Yes, the Lord is God!"
1 Kings 18:38-39

I mean, how can anyone that is double-minded expect to receive anything from God? They can't! You see, the children of Israel were unstable in what God they were serving. Some were serving God and some were serving Baal. They were being obedient to God sometimes, when it had a good pay off, and they were obeying Baal when they pay off was better for them. We may not think that we would ever change our allegiance to God for anything this world has to offer. However, you see people, who profess to know Jesus do it all the time. That kind of person is double-minded, and they cannot ever expect to receive anything from God. They might, at times, because God is a God of amazing grace, but they cannot expect to receive it.

For instance—healing is a covenant promise to those who believe Jesus' work on the cross, where he took all of those wounds, paid for the healing of those who believe. How do we believe? We make a decision to follow Jesus! However, if we are double-minded by living for Jesus when we are around Christian friends, but, we live following the ways of the world when that seems like more fun. Then we are double-minded— We are unstable in all of our ways—we cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord. God may grace us, but we cannot pray that God will heal and expect it to happen. Remember what John, the gospel writer wrote in Revelation these powerful words:

Revelation 3:15-17 (TPT)

"I know all that you do, and I know that you are neither frozen in apathy nor fervent with passion. How I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, I am about to spit you from my mouth. For you claim, "I'm rich and getting richer—I don't need a thing." Yet you are clueless that you're miserable, poor, blind, barren, and naked!"

That is exactly how God saw the Children of Israel back in 1 Kings 18. That is how He sees you and I, if we are double-minded. He is able to vomit people out of his mouth. That is a very serious place for people to find themselves. May I suggest to you that, if you are double-minded in the way you serve God, it is time to make a choice to fully follow Jesus. That is exactly what Elijah is saying to the children of Israel in the days in 1 Kings 18-19—Let's go finish that story now!

So, after crying out to Baal by the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah they were completely worn out. They had begun at early morning prayer—they had cried, prayed and cut themselves, and put up with Elijah's teasing and finally had realized that their God was not going to answer with fire from heaven. Now, their faith may have been shaken up a bit, but Elijah's God hadn't answered yet either. I am sure they are concerned about what is about to happen.

1 Kings 18:28-29 (NLT)

So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out. They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no reply, no response.

Notice that last sentence of this passage. "There was no sound, no reply, or no response from Baal or Asherah." It was time for the evening sacrifice and Elijah did something very significant to prepare for His turn. First, he invited everyone to come around him.

1 Kings 18:30-33a (NLT)

Then Elijah called to the people, "Come over here!" They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, and he used the stones to rebuild the altar in the name of the Lord. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood.

First, he calls the people to come over to where he was at, to fully makes decision to fully follow God, they had to move away from Baal's altar—Elijah used the 12 stones, some wood. But Elijah didn't stop there. He dug a trench that would have held about 3 gallons (11.36 liters) of water. Elijah knew full well the story of the lack of water. He had prayed for God to hold rain for 3 1/2 years, and it still hasn't rained, at this point in the story.

Then, it is time for Elijah to pray to God. However, before the prayer, "Elijah repairs the altar of the Lord that had been torn down." You see, the place of communication with God had been torn down and it had to be rebuilt. Sometimes our place of our communication with God gets torn down as well. Sometimes, it hasn't been used in long time. We need to make an effort to rebuild a true altar, not just a place to ask for things from God. But rather, have a place of regular use where we go on purpose, and with a purpose to communicate with God. You see, since the beginning of the world, God has longed to have a face to face encounter with his people and sometimes on purpose, or just, by the lack of use, we allow this place, called an altar, in our heart gets broken down. May I invite you today, as Elijah did with the people of Israel, to restore or rebuild this place of communication with God?

So, then Elijah, had rebuilt “the altar in the name of the Lord.” After that, “he dug a trench” that would hold about 3 gallons (11.36 liters) of water around the altar. I wonder what the people having lived in a drought for 3 1/2 years must have thought about him doing this? “He piled the wood onto the altar” then “cut the bull into pieces and laid them on the wood.”

1 Kings 18:33-35 (NLT)

“He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood. Then he said, “Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood.” After they had done this, he said, “Do the same thing again!” And when they were finished, he said, “Now do it a third time!” So they did as he said, and the water ran around the altar and even filled the trench.”

Take note: Elijah had the people pour the water over the altar, and the bull four times, so much water that it covered the altar and filled the trench. The people knew that there was so much water that if a fire could get started in there it would have to be from God.

Then, Elijah Prays:

1 Kings 18:36-37 (NLT)

At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

At the normal time for the evening sacrifice, Elijah walked up to the altar and prayed a 58 word prayer, (in this translation) declaring who God is, who he is, proof that what he had done was from God’s command, and asked God for the answer, so that these people will know that the Lord is God and that he has brought them back to God.

1 Kings 38-40 (NLT)

Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench! And when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, “The Lord—he is God! Yes, the Lord is God!” Then Elijah commanded, “Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don’t let a single one escape!” So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

When Elijah prayed, there was no yelling, screaming, blood, and any of that—Just the answer of fire from heaven. It happened “Immediately.”

The fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven. It burned up “the young bull, the wood the stones and the dust” It even “licked up all the water in the trench.” This was an all consuming fire. When all the people saw it, “they fell face down on the ground and cried out, The Lord—He is God! Yes, the Lord is God.” What a total change of heart! They were not double-minded anymore.

Then Elijah commanded, “Seize all of the prophets of Baal. Don’t let a single one escape.”

So, the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.”

None of the enemy of God escaped. When we are dealing with the worship of other gods they are to be completely destroyed. What an incredible victory that the overcoming prophet and the people of God saw that day.

During the next part we will follow this great victory with another incredible victory, (1 Kings 18) but after that we see Elijah experience the difficulty of depression. (1 Kings 19) We will see him move out of victory into defeat. Then we will see him find freedom and another great victory in (1 Kings 19.) As you will see, many people will have times of great victory and then still have times of depression. But, God is well able to remove depression from us and help us walk in true victory. More about that later.

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 6]

In part 6 we will finish the part of the story about Elijah. You might remember after on the last lesson. Elijah, has just overcome the 400 prophets of Baal and the 400 other prophets in 1 Kings 18! This is an incredible story and if you didn't read the part 5 you may want to start there.

At any rate, Elijah has just experienced a great victory and has moved on to his next big event which can be found 1 Kings 18:41-46. Let's look at this victory together today.

I love this faith of this great Prophet of God:

1 Kings 18:41-42 (NLT)

"Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go get something to eat and drink, for I hear a mighty rainstorm coming!" So Ahab went to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees."

Look at this holy confidence! In this story earlier in this book, Elisha has prayed and declared that there would not be any rain for the next few years until I say. 1 Kings 17:1. It is in this chapter that God feeds Elijah by the Ravens. These birds brought him bread and meat, morning and night, at a certain spot where God had told Elijah to go. However, because there was no rainfall the brook finally dried up. Then Elijah goes as the Lord led him, and he winds up at the house of a widow. It is a great story and worth reading in 1 Kings 17:1-24.

In this story with the widow, there are two very powerful miracles. The first was that God caused the widow's almost empty jar of flour and a "little cooking oil" left in the jug and God turned it into a miracle. The widow and her son were ready to make their last meal and then die when Elijah came along. You will have to read the story to get the picture of what God did through this great Prophet.

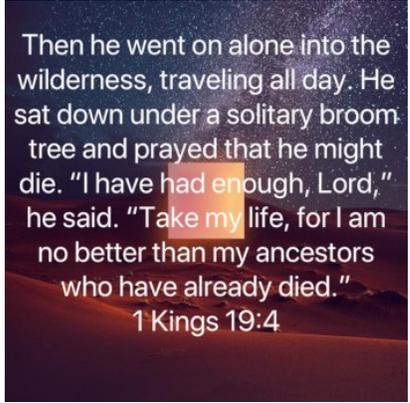
After a while the little boy became very sick and finally he died. Elijah raised him from the dead. Go see the story if you don't believe me, but Elijah arrives at Mount Carmel. So, this great victory of 1 Kings 18 came on the heels of these great miracles.

Now, back to the story. Elijah tells Ahab the "go get something to eat and drink for I hear a mighty rainstorm coming." Ahab takes him up on the offer, though remember it hasn't rained for over 3 years so this was obviously a very strong statement of faith for Elijah, but he has no reason to doubt that God would come through.

In 1 Kings 18– we read this story in verses 42-46. Read it here:

1 Kings 18:42-46 (NLT)

"...But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees. Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea." The servant went and looked, then returned to Elijah and said,



Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."
1 Kings 19:4

"I didn't see anything." Seven times Elijah told him to go and look. Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a man's hand rising from the sea." Then Elijah shouted, "Hurry to Ahab and tell him, 'Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don't hurry, the rain will stop you!'" And soon the sky was black with clouds. A heavy wind brought a terrific rainstorm, and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel. Then the Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel."

Now, in this story we see that Ahab took Elijah up on the offer to get food and drink. Elijah bows down to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees and then says to his servant "go out toward the sea." The servant went out and looked and returned and said he didn't see anything. He did this 7 times. Notice, Elijah didn't just go out by the sea. He prayed on the place at his last victory on Carmel. He keeps sending his servant out 7 times he sends him. On the 7th and final time the boy comes back and says, "I saw a little cloud the size of a man's hand rising up out of the sea." Notice it was not a large cloud, it wasn't a bunch of clouds, it was just a small cloud the size of a man's hand. Elijah gets up. Yells at the King Ahab to get in his chariot and ride, if you don't hurry the rain will stop you.

All of a sudden the clouds were black. A heavy wind brought a terrific windstorm. Ahab left quickly. Then another huge miracle happens, God gave a special gift to Elijah. This great prophet tucked his cloak under his belt, and he outran Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel. Wow! Can you imagine a man outrunning a chariot driven by horses. Of course not, it was the power of the Holy Spirit that came on Elijah and gave him this special ability.

Wow! What a great story. Elijah is in the best of moods. He has just seen victory after victory, however, that is not what happens. When King Ahab returned to Jezreel he went and told his wife Jezebel about all the great things Elijah had done. He even told her about Elijah killing all of those false prophets of Baal. Great right?

1 Kings 19:2-5 (NLT)

"So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them." Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died." Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!"

Ahab tells of the victories and the next verse, Jezebel sends a short note and threatened to kill Elijah before that time the next day. Look at the next statement. Does this sound like a victorious Prophet of God? "Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die."

He has just called down fire from heaven, killed 850 false prophets, called down fire from heaven, and outran the chariots to the city and in contrast one woman writes him a hate-filled note and off he is to the wilderness, huddles up under a broom tree and asks God to take his life. He says: "I have had enough, Lord. Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died, Then he laid down and fell ... asleep."

He is at the depths of depression in a few hours time, all because some women, who was not following God, writes him a note with some hate in it. Don't get down on Elijah. You and I have experienced depression or at least being down in the dumps for not much more than that. We hadn't even just experienced 4 or 5 amazing miracles in a row.

Well, it is hard to understand, but we will see what happens with Elijah in part 7, but we do know that an "Angel touched him and told him to 'get up and eat.'" Then we will see the rest of this story from victory—to depression—to victory. Sound familiar?

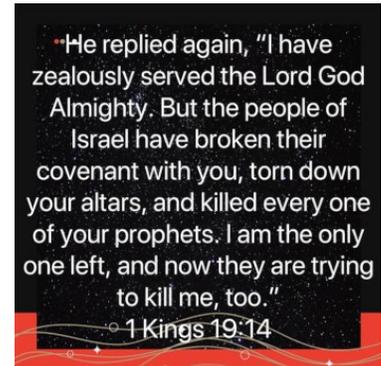
Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 7]

This part will be a little longer than I like, but I needed to get this Elijah journey finished to begin the last two parts of this series. Please take the time to read this.

When we last left Elijah on his journey he was experiencing a very real depression.

Let me remind you of a short list of the great miracles Elijah experienced in [1 Kings 17-19](#).

- *Elijah prays and asks God to stop the dew and rain from the earth until he gives the word.*
- *He is fed morning and night both bread and meat by ravens.*
- *Meets a Widow and her son who were about to have their last meal and die. They gather jars, as many as they could find, and God caused there to always be flour and oil available.*
- *The Widow's son dies and Elijah raises him from the dead.*
- *Elijah has the show down on Mt Carmel. God answers with fire from heaven.*
- *Elijah prays for rain again and it began with a small cloud the size of a man's hand.*
- *Elijah is given a supernatural strength and outran the chariots to the city.*
- *Then he receives a note from Jezebel with a threat to kill him and Elijah runs off to the wilderness and gets under a small broom tree. Depressed, feeling alone and asking God to take his life.*



Now, how does a guy go from such a victorious life with incredible miracles, get one threat from one woman, and then feel the need to run off into the wilderness asking for God to take his life? Let me just tell you this is exactly how some types of depression can come on. Elijah had been living on adrenaline for quite a while here and having some real victories. He has been miraculously fed on several occasions. We were not created to live on adrenaline for very long without good rest. We were created to rest well and eat well if we are going to be going from one spiritual battle to another one.

Let's pick up here on this story in 1 Kings 19:

[1 Kings 19:5-9 \(NLT\)](#)

"Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again. Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Here is Elijah under the broom tree sleeping. Incidentally, one of the signs of most kinds of depression is that we want to sleep a lot. Elijah has gone a while since he had eaten, as far as we know. He has followed God's instructions very closely. He has not had much rest. When he got to the city this evil woman Jezebel sent him this note filled with hate and threatens to kill him. Watch what God does here through this angel. He is sleeping away and this angel touches him and says "Get up and eat." Now there were no stores or cafe's out in the desert. He looks up and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water. So, he eats and drinks and lays down and goes back to sleep. So, though depressed people love to sleep so they don't feel their pain it is better for them to get up and eat at times too!

Then the angel comes again, he touched Elijah and said "Get up and eat some more or the journey ahead will be too much for you." So, he followed the instructions and the food gave him enough strength to travel 40 days and 40 nights to get to Mt Sinai, to the mountain of God, Where God had given Moses the Law. Now, that was some food that can strengthen you enough to make. It for 40 day and 40 nights walking through the desert. However, when we are depressed we need our rest, but we also need strength to keep moving toward God.

He spent the night in the cave. Then the Lord asked him an important question. As you know, when God asks a question He is not really looking for an answer. The question: "What are you doing here Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:10 (NLT)

"Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.""

In Elijah's answer you see the signs of depression in what his assessment of the situation was. He tells God how he has served the Lord God almighty— zealously. What does that word mean? KJV chose to translate this word as "jealous." The word has the connotation that He had served God without abandonment. In other words, He has stayed in the journey no matter what and had not abandoned his post. One of the things that we do when we feel depressed is we answer each question with a statement that proves our value. Why? Because we do not feel we have any value at that time, and we are looking for someone else to validate us.

He doesn't mention that he had just rebuilt the altar of God for Israel, he only mentions that the whole people of Israel have broken their covenant, and torn down the altar, and have killed all of God's prophets which was not completely true, though Jezebel had wanted to do just that. A sign of a person being depressed and discouraged seems to talk out in hyperbole. "Everyone has been killed. " "Everyone has torn down the altars." "I am the only one who has been faithful, and by the way, I am the only one left, and they, want to kill me."

Look at just the times God has miraculously fed this guy. God did exactly what he asked for with rain. He stopped the rain, and then he started the rain again at Elijah's word. He has done so much for this man—but before you attack this wearied Prophet of God, think! Depression has a way of blinding us to the full picture. He has so much to be thankful for, but he is still worried that "they" are trying to kill him, yet all he has is a note from one woman.

There is no “they” to it. Depression really affects our vision. What Elijah is experiencing is, or can be, a very dangerous level of depression.

Look what God does:

1 Kings 19:11-13 (NLT)

“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. And a voice said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?””

A Windstorm hits the mountain, but the Lord was not in the wind.

An Earthquake - but the Lord was not in the earthquake.

Then there was a fire — Bu the Lord was not in the fire.

Then a gentle whisper — when Elijah heard it, he wrapped himself in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice then asked the question again, “What are you doing here Elijah?”

Wouldn't you think Elijah would stand up, do a little jig and say, “Okay God, I'm back!” Well you would think, but Elijah was truly depressed. People in this state do not respond well to loud noises, like “get up, pull up your boot straps and get going.” They don't respond to loud things like wind, earthquakes or even fires. They respond the best to someone talking to them in a gentle whisper. Here is Elijah's answer after the question in verse 13.

1 Kings 19:14 (NLT)

“He replied again, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

Notice this one last thing with me. A depressed person does not most times respond to loud noises or even still small voices—it might touch their life and make them ready to hear the answer, but they cannot see the answer though it is right in front of their face. So, what does God do? He gives him new marching orders. That is what you do with someone who is depressed. You give them purpose and help them feel useful again. Here is God's way of responding to Elijah's still depressed answer:

1 Kings 19:15-18 (NLT)

“Then the Lord told him, “Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. Then anoint Jehu grandson of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed

down to Baal or kissed him!”

God tells him go back the same way you came. See if a person wants to get past depression they have to go back and finish the journey we cut short by running. There he tells him some people to anoint and all of that. Then he gives the bottom line.

Oh, and by the way, “I will preserve 7000 people in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him.” So, you are not the only one. The thing a person walking in depression has to catch at some point is that they are not in this alone. Not only will God walk with us through this depression, but he has a remnant of people, waiting in the wings, ready to serve Him and be helpers to build the Kingdom of God.

Again I am sorry this is so long but I needed to finish this story about Elijah. Now, we can finish out this short series on depression by learning how to respond to depression and find the recovering hope that God has for any of us walking out this journey or to help someone else who is walking through this journey.

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 8]

We finished the last part with the story of Elijah, what a wonderful picture of the human life as we walk at times in great victory, and at other times in deep defeat. However, we learn from the life of Elijah that we are never alone on our journey. Not only is God with us, but God has a remnant of people that are faithful to the Lord that can walk this life out together.

In this part, we will finish up the symptoms of depression from a few parts back, and then we will try to look at how to respond to depression.

Serious or Major Depression

All depression can become very serious if we do not deal with it. This serious type of depression can present itself in many ways. When the symptoms that we looked at in Psalm 102 in Part 3, of this series, becomes more dramatic and disabling for weeks and for months at a time, a doctor would most likely give a diagnosis of a person with “major depression.” When the symptoms are low-grade and chronic, then it is sometimes called “dysthymic disorder.”

Depression can also fluctuate in a pattern between what we often call “mood swings.” A person can be feeling irritable, and then become euphoric (very intense feeling of excitement and happiness—they may even explain it as feeling free.) After that they move right back into having the inability to sleep (insomnia), or then become agitated. This is sometimes diagnosed as a “Bi-polar disorder” or some call it “Manic Depressive Illness.”

Let me make it very clear, I am not a doctor and this information is not written with the purpose of being able to diagnose someone or yourself. It is only given to give a kind of embryonic understanding so that you know what to present with to your doctor.

How Do We Respond To Depression?

In our study of depression we saw through Elijah’s life, both healthy and unhealthy ways, to respond to depression. 1 Kings 19 gave us an incredible picture of the extreme responses to depression. First, notice that Elijah was not just some down-and-out kind of guy. He was a Prophet of God. Used mightily by God in so many ways. He was so amazing that when he got to the end of his life, he didn’t even have to die, as normal, but he just was translated away from where he was to where God wanted him to be. That is pretty fantastic, but is also very revealing that even this great man of God went through times of depression and internal pain. 2 Kings 2:11

2 Kings 2:11 (NLT)

As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven.



We saw in Elijah's story that no matter, how powerful that God used him on Mount Carmel, with just a small amount of, a challenge against him, sent him off, asking God to take his life. Depression, fear, and anxiety sent him spiraling into hiding. If you summarize his behavior it fits well into what doctors describe as "H.A.L.T. syndrome." It is a very difficult and vulnerable place to find yourself.

At Elijah's most Depressed Place:

Hungry— He stopped eating.

Angry — He was mad at God for not caring about Him.

Lonely — He left his servant and traveled alone.

Tired — He collapsed into sleep.

Whenever a person experiences an intense combination of these attributes, he or she may be becoming vulnerable to developing some sort of depression. You can read more about this by putting this title in your browser: HALT: The Dangers of Hunger, Anger, Loneliness, and Tiredness. Or you can click on this link. <https://bradfordhealth.com/halt-hunger-anger-loneliness-tiredness/>

Elijah was such a powerful man of God. He went through this time of depression in his life that was intense. However, he is mentioned many times in the Bible apart from his life story in 1 & 2 Kings. One of the greatest is when he shows up on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Moses and a few of his disciples:

Matthew 17:4 (NLT)

Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I'll make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

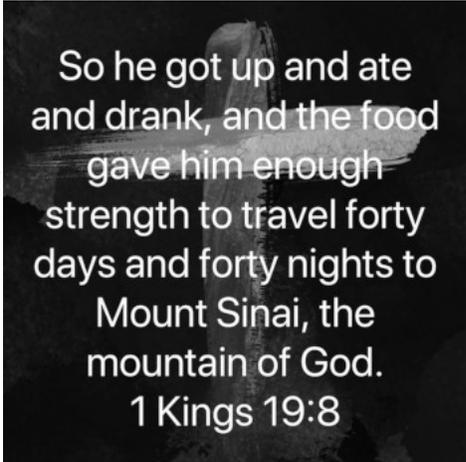
Next is the last part about "depression." We will discover how we go about rediscovering hope after we have been touched, in any way, with this thing called depression.

Depression—The Depths of Despair [part 9]

As I come to the end of this series on depression, I would like to thank all of those who have followed it through to the end. This is, of course, not all that we need to know about this subject. However, this gives you a place to begin to see yourself, or someone else that may be struggling with such a battle.

It is interesting that God counteracted the H.A.L.T Syndrome in Elijah's life at every level. He responded by providing food for Elijah. An angel touched Elijah, reminding him that he was not alone.

Two times God encouraged Elijah to regain his strength by eating, drinking and resting. God brought him out of the H.A.L.T. syndrome which enabled Elijah to listen and obey.



So he got up and ate
and drank, and the food
gave him enough
strength to travel forty
days and forty nights to
Mount Sinai, the
mountain of God.
1 Kings 19:8

1 Kings 19:5-18 (NLT)

Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you."

So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.

The Lord Speaks to Elijah

But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

"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.

And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He replied again, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

Then the Lord told him, "Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. Then anoint Jehu grandson of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!"

The story of Elijah reminds us of the importance of having a real and personal relationship with God. As New Testament believers we understand that relationship happens, as we develop and maintain our relationship with Jesus Christ on a daily basis, by being in the Word of God and in prayer. When we are depressed, we may often feel like running away from our problems like Elijah. However, It is vital that we resist the temptation to isolate ourselves, as much of an impulse as that might be.

We each have a very real need to be accountable to ourselves, but also to a pastor, a friend, a family member or even a Christian counselor to help us navigate through tough times. I have spent a lot of hours with depressed people over the years in my counseling office. And almost, to the very last client, I have ever had that is dealing with depression, I can say this. If they had become invested in an accountability relationship earlier in their process they would have never needed to come to me. However, they did and guess what is one of the first things I had to talk to them about? I had to encourage them to develop an accountability partner. That person can help bring deeper change than I can just because of the value their relationship holds. It would take me another whole chapter to lay out the importance and the depth of a committed accountability. However, I feel I should make one thing understood. I suggest that a man would need, find a brother to ask, for accountability and a woman should ask another Christian woman to be their accountability partner. This becomes a very close and intimate relationship that cannot bare the burden of temptations that they could face if failure was to happen.

One more important thing I feel I must share here is that depressed people must be very careful to avoid addictive behaviors, social avoidant responses found in people or any kind of unhealthy relationships. This is obviously easier to say than to do. Many times we do not know the struggles people have internally until we are invested to some degree. It may be important to step away from some of those relationships, because many times they can deepen a depressed state.

Even though Elijah felt hopeless, Elijah was able to accept the help God offered to him. We have an advantage in our day because we have the “whole counsel” of God’s word available, unlike Elijah. However, we must absorb these words through reading the Word daily and developing the powerful gift of journaling to get it invested into our lives. Though others can and will teach us things and help us understand God’s Word at times, there is no substitute from digging out the truth for ourselves.

One thing Elijah was able to do is recognize God’s voice. You and I can recognize His voice as well. The more we know Him and know His Word the more clear His voice becomes. You may wonder what God’s voice sounds like? Simply put, it sounds a lot like God’s Word. Elijah was able to be strengthened and encouraged by God’s voice. He was then able to return to the life that God had laid out of him, only with a new ability to cope with life’s passage, and a new hope for the journey ahead. We, too, can hear God’s voice, and we can enter into life, at just the right time, with a boldness that comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Things to Meditate on Further:

Here are some other passages of scripture or you to study with the idea of depression in mind:

* [Psalm 27;34;40:1-3;42;43;88;143;147:3](#)

* [Isaiah 41:10;43:2](#)

* [Romans 8:18-39](#)

* [2 Corinthians 1:8-11](#)