

Elijah: A Man Like Us

Part Five

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

"Talking Points, Walking Points" is a publication of the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- When you see a flawed person in the Bible (such as David, the adulterer and murderer), do you think: *"How could they?! Why are they even in the Bible?"* or *"I can identify. I'm the same way."* ? **Why** do you think that is?
- Elijah had two complaints: "I'm not appreciated." and "I'm indispensable." (see Sermon Summary). Which of those two complaints do you hear yourself saying more?

What does self-pity say about us? About God?

- Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. Mark the five occurrences of the word "weak/weakness" in v. 5, 9 & 10. [Note: When Paul says *"I know a man who..."* (v. 2-5), he's talking about himself (see v. 7-10).]

Have you ever known someone who was **content** to be—even **boasted** about—being weak (v. 9-10)?

What did Paul know that Elijah didn't?
(See the ends of v. 9 & 10 *"so that..."* and *"for..."*.)

What would have to change in you for **you** to be "well content" to be weak?

Need help with a spiritual weakness?
Then write to:
BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Application-Challenge

- Remember that the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. A good start does not guarantee a successful finish. Make it your goal to finish well.
- Realize that past successes can set us up emotionally for spiritual let downs. After so much success, Elijah's failure should serve as flashing red lights which say, **"Watch Out! Caution! Danger! Beware!"**
- Feeling unappreciated can set us up for a spiritual decline. When you catch yourself thinking, *"I'm not adequately appreciated around here!"*, realize that's pride talking. Be amazed that God even chooses to use us at all. Be satisfied to wait for God to say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master."*

Sermon Summary

Key Texts: 1 Kings 19

The Bible is filled with the wreckage and debris of men and women who have failed in the faith. This tells me that God, not man, is its ultimate author. We tend to gloss over our sins, but God doesn't. God is a realist; when he portrays a man, he paints him warts and all. But these accounts of failure also tell me that the God who stands behind this book is a God of grace. He wants us to profit from the failures of others. These accounts of failure are flashing red lights, saying: "Watch Out! Caution! Danger! Beware!" It's much more pleasant to learn from others' mistakes than from our own!

Elijah's life teaches that victory makes us vulnerable (1 Kings 19). It gives us a false sense of invulnerability, so we lower our guard (1 Corinthians 10:12). At the very point that you think you are strongest, you become most vulnerable. We have seen Elijah at his highest (1 Kings 18), and now we see him at his lowest. The fact that these two extremes are so chronologically close is a key in understanding this passage. Victory, followed quickly by defeat. **Elijah had two complaints:**

[1] "I am not appreciated." (1 Kings 19:1-4) King Ahab told Jezebel the bad news that Yahweh had prevailed, and now all the prophets of Baal were dead (v. 1). At this, Jezebel sprang into action (v. 2). Jezebel threatened Elijah, swearing that he would be dead in twenty-four hours. (She knew that his popularity was so great that rash action on her part could backfire. When Elijah received this message, he panicked and fled south to Beersheba—120 miles away! He's so paranoid, he left his servant there and fled even further south (v. 3-4a). How his circumstances have changed: one day ago he was on Mt. Carmel, calling down fire from heaven. And now he's saying, "God, take me home—I'm done!" Elijah is saying, "I don't deserve to be treated like this!"

Two things contributed to his feelings of self-pity: [a] Elijah was looking at his circumstances. Elijah is looking through the wrong end of the telescope—Yahweh is small and Jezebel is huge! The moment Elijah took his eyes off of God he lost every ounce of courage. **[b] Elijah was physically and emotionally drained.** Just think what Elijah's been through: a tremendously exhilarating, but equally exhausting, experience. That can lead to a vulnerable time for any of us. That's why I never make an important decision when I'm tired. It is amazing what a good night's sleep can do to renew one's spiritual perspective. Don't forget—we have both body and soul, and they affect each other. We burn the candle on both ends, and wonder why we aren't demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. We are more spiritually vulnerable when we are emotionally or physically exhausted. Through Christian fellowship we come alongside each other to strengthen, encourage and restore (Galatians 6:1-2). Are you engaged in that kind of ministry to others? You should be.

[2] "I am indispensable." (1 Kings 19:9-10) Elijah complained: "Lord, what in the world will you do when I pass off the scene? I'm all you've got, and I'm indispensable." It is interesting how we can distort facts—remember: all the people rose up and said, "The Lord, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39). Now Elijah is saying, "Lord, I'm the only one left." But when you are emotionally distraught, when you are physically shot, everything looks distorted. And then he says, "And they seek my life"—suddenly one person, Jezebel, becomes the whole nation. Yet God was gracious, giving Elijah a revelation of his person and of his power, as a means to restoring Elijah (19:11-13). Even at this, Elijah has learned nothing, repeating what he said earlier (19:14 cf. 10). God gave Elijah this tremendous revelation to try to help him regain perspective, but he wasn't paying attention. That's what we do too: we replay pity-party tapes in our heads, rehearsing our complaints, hurts, and all the ways we've been mistreated and unappreciated. Notice how many times the pronouns, "I", "me" and "my" show up in chapter 19. They were all but absent in chapters 17-18. But God never rebuts the prophet; he just give him a new assignment (v. 15-16). God delights to use us, but don't ever think your work is indispensable. Overestimating our importance is a virus that infects many of God's servants. As we come to the end of our study of Elijah, God not only encourages us through his experiences, but he also provides a warning.

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

“Five Question Bible Study” (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage or topic. We can use it to learn how to overcome self-pity...

Monday—Read Psalm 73:1-14. List the evidences of self-pity. Which of those do you struggle with?

Tuesday—Self-pity says “I am deprived.” Read Ephesians 1:3. It also calls God a stingy liar!

Wednesday—Read Romans 8:31-39. What perspective should we have when we’re tempted to self-pity?

Thursday—Read Job 1:1-3, 13-22. What perspective kept Job from indulging in self-pity?

Friday—Read Numbers 27:12-17. What did Moses do in order to not let self-pity rule his heart?

Saturday—*In preparation for worshipping our risen Lord tomorrow with your church family,*
read Psalm 19:7-14.

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



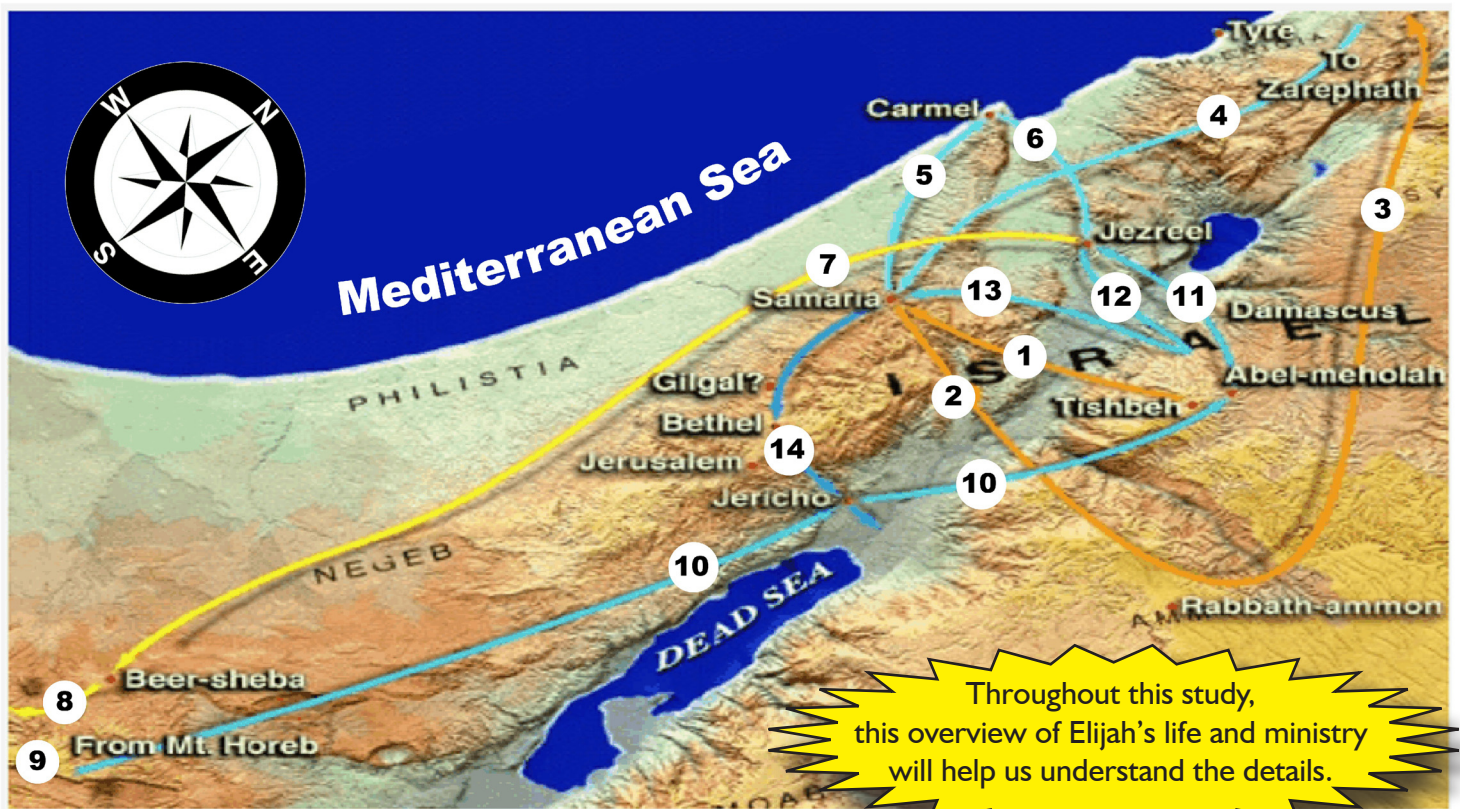
What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]



1. Elijah of Tishbeh went to Samaria to warn Ahab of a drought (1 Kings 17:1)
2. Elijah then retired to the brook Cherith, where he was fed until the brook dried up. (17:1-7)
3. Then Elijah was sent to Zarephath, where he multiplied the widow's oil and meal. (17:8-24)
4. In the third year Elijah returned to Samaria and met Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-19)
5. Then Elijah summoned Israel to Mt. Carmel to decide between Yahweh and Baal. Yahweh was vindicated by fire consuming the altar and sacrifice (18:20-40)
6. As rain came, Elijah ran before Ahab to Jezreel (18:41-46)
7. Threatened by Jezebel, Elijah fled southward through Beersheba (1 Kings 19:1-3)
8. Here Elijah was visited by an angel in the desert under a juniper tree (19:4-8a)
9. Elijah went on to Mt. Horeb (19:8b-14)
10. Returning to Gilead, Elijah appointed Elisha of Abel-meholah as prophet (19:15-21)
11. Later Elijah rebuked Ahab at Jezreel for the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 20:1—21:19)
12. It is *possible* that Elijah then returned to Gilead until Ahab's death (1 Kings 21:20-29)
13. Journeying to Samaria, Elijah met Ahaziah's messengers, then the king himself, and predicted the latter's death (2 Kings 1)
14. Finally Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal through Bethel and Jericho, across the Jordan, to the place of his ascension (2 Kings 2)

THIS WEEK!