

Missing PEACE (Part 7) Beating Burnout

What is burnout?

Burnout is a manifestation of chronic unmitigated stress.

- **STRESS** is generally short-lived and related to a temporary project or event.
- **BURNOUT** is chronic stress that feels never-ending.

BURNOUT can have wide-ranging effects **Physically, Mentally, and Emotionally.**

- **Emotional Exhaustion** is a hallmark of burnout, characterized by feeling drained, emotionally distant, and unable to cope with daily stressors.

Can you think of a man of God in the Old Testament who experienced **anxiety, depression, exhaustion, and burnout**?

Today we will take a closer look at the prophet Elijah.

The first thing to note is the Bible's assessment of Elijah. James says the prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective, then gives Elijah as the example!

All that to say, that you can be right with God with a powerful and effective prayer life... and slip into less than stellar mental health conditions.

So how did that happen to Elijah?

First, Elijah experienced these problems after a prolonged battle with the wicked King Ahab who married an even more wicked princess, the daughter of a pagan king, who was a pagan worshiper of BAAL—the chief god of the pantheon of the gods of the Canaanites.

Elijah confronted King Ahab who was leading the whole nation astray. If you want to read the backstory, start at 1 Kings 16.

By the time we arrive at 1 Kings 19, Elijah has been battling this wickedness for 3 and a half years. The final showdown took place in 1 Kings 18. It was Elijah versus 450 priests of Baal, and 400 priests of Asherah, the counterpart goddess.

There was a tremendous victory, but by the time it was over. Elijah was spent. And although the battle between the gods proved the LORD YAHWEH WAS TRULY GOD overall.

Jezebel threatened to murder Elijah.

1 Kings 19:3–5 (NIV) Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."

It doesn't seem to make any sense. How did this man who was so bold for the last 3 and a half years, and so boldly won the victory show down on Mt Carmel, suddenly now experiencing a melt down at the threat of one angry woman?

Burnout is a manifestation of chronic unmitigated stress.

How did Elijah arrive at such a condition?

I. SOME COMMON CAUSES OF BURNOUT

A. We RUN ourselves into the GROUND

1 Kings 19:3 (NIV) Elijah was afraid and ran for his life...

- The previous night he outran Ahab's chariots down the mountain.
- The next day he ran to BEERSHEBA... about 120 miles away!
- **Are you running yourself into the ground?** Be careful. You have limitations. You are not the energizer bunny. You can't keep going, and going, and going.
- God has created you with a renewable energy supply. But to be renewed, you need to maintain the rhythms that come with God's instructions.

B. We TRY to do it ALL on our OWN

1 Kings 19:3 (NIV) ... When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there ...

- Elijah left his wingman in Beersheba. Why'd he do that? He left his most trusted friend. Why would you battle alone?
- **BY THE WAY...** if you are watching this online, and you have made watching online your new habit, you might be trying to do life on your own. I believe that is a mistake.
 - Don't do life alone.
 - Life is better together.
 - Iron sharpens iron, and so one person sharpens another.
 - We function best in Christian community.
- **BUT HERE IS THE PROBLEM...**

- When you are feeling the symptoms of burnout...you tend to want to isolate yourself. You don't want to tell people how you are not ok. **Unfortunately, that can make matters worse.**

C. We DWELL on the NEGATIVE

1 Kings 19:4–6 (NIV) . . . “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

- One typical negative thinking mistake is to **compare** yourself to others.
- Another typical negative thinking mistake is **complaining**.
- Elijah does both.

But the Angel does not scold or correct. The Angel gave him food.

I've heard of Angel food cake, but this ANGEL FOOD BREAD was something else!!!

1 Kings 19:8 (NIV) . . . Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

After having traveled 120 miles, Elijah travels another 40 days to stand in the presence of the Lord on MT. Horeb/ Sinai—an additional journey of about 250 miles!

1 Kings 19:9 (NIV) There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Elijah answers:

1 Kings 19:10 (NIV) He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

Does that sound like more negative thinking to you?

Take a look at what happens 3 verse later:

1 Kings 19:13 (NIV) When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

1 Kings 19:14 (NIV) He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

God asked the question 2 times and Elijah answered the question 2 times. Why? What happened between the first question and the repeated question?

1 Kings 19:11–12 (NIV) The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

The question and the answer was repeated without any change in wording.

That says to me that Elijah was STUCK in his negative thinking.

So stuck, God’s powerful working hand didn’t shake it loose. The wind that could split rocks didn’t shake it loose. The earthquake didn’t shake it loose. The fire that followed didn’t shake it loose.

But God wasn’t going to leave Elijah stuck like this.

II. THE CURE: God CAME to HIM

- While Elijah was doing all the wrong things... and stuck in his negative thinking state... GOD CAME TO HIM!
- Isn’t that just like God with us?

Romans 5:8 (NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- In Elijah’s darkest moment, God came to him.
- In your darkest moment, God comes to you. Seek him. Look for him.

FIRST God came very practically...

sending an angel
giving him food, and rest.

A. **Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is REST**

These are rhythms of God’s grace given to us by his design and his instruction! Resting before God to honor him is called the Sabbath!

When you are EMPTY, you need to RECHARGE! Rest, refresh, let God restore you.

God comes to you PRACTICALLY!

God also comes to you PERSONALLY!

B. **Ultimately, what you need most, is an ENCOUNTER with God himself.**

All you need is some space and silence to hear God’s whisper. One encounter can change everything. Where was God? He wasn’t in the extraordinary, He was in the ordinary. God was in the whisper. If you’ll be still and slow down, God may speak to you in one of your

ordinary moments. While you are driving, doing the dishes, or changing a diaper. **Why does he whisper? Because he is close to you.**

What did God say to Elijah in a whisper? Read it for yourself. God gave him an assignment and encouragement. It made all the difference.

Lord God,

Help us to hear. Thank you heavenly father for speaking to us today. Thank you for coming to us today in this ordinary moment to whisper to us today.

Help us to depend on you. Help us NOT to run on our own, or do more than you call us to do, but to find your rhythms of grace, your strength, and most of all your presence.

Talk It Over

MISSING PEACE

Part 7

Beating Burnout

SMALL TALK

1. Have you ever experienced a period of extreme stress or burnout in your life? What were the circumstances, and how did you cope with it?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read 1 Kings 19:1-4.** What were the events leading up to Elijah's experience of burnout? How did he react to Queen Jezebel's threat, and what can we learn from his initial response?
3. **Read 1 Kings 19:5-9.** Elijah received sustenance and guidance from God. What lessons can we draw from this about finding renewal and rest during times of stress or burnout?
4. **1 Kings 19:11-13.** What does Elijah's encounter with God reveal about God? How can we seek and recognize God's presence and guidance in challenging times?
5. **1 Kings 19:15-18.** How did God help Elijah? What changed?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. What are some practical ways you can seek rest and renewal, physically, mentally, and spiritually?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. What are some steps you can take to rediscover or clarify your life's purpose, even during difficult times of stress or burnout?