



## Elijah Series #8

“Lessons from A Cave Where Elijah gets reconnected to God and Ministry”

### Introduction

So far we have extracted numerous timeless lessons or principles in our examination of Elijah’s life long journey of faith.

- I. **Lessons from the Palace where Elijah boldly announced God’s judgment for sin. 17:1**
- II. **Lessons from the brook where Elijah learned to trust God in obscurity and isolation. 17:2-7**
- III. **Lessons from Zarephath where Elijah learned to trust God for daily ministry 17:8-24**
- IV. **Lessons from the Palace Part two where Elijah confronted Ahab again 18:1-19**
- V. **Lessons from Mount Carmel where Elijah confronted Baalism 18:20-40**
- VI. **Lessons from a Mountain Top where Elijah fervently prayed 18:41-46**
- VII. **Lessons from a Cave where Elijah reconnects with God and Ministry 19:1-21**

Last week we attempted to track the cause and cure for Elijah’s depression.

- A. **Cause of Elijah’s Lapse 19:1-5**
  1. **External circumstances or environment**
  2. **Self-focused fear rather than God-focused faith**
  3. **Physical/emotional exhaustion**
  4. **Isolation**
  5. **Self-destructive thoughts**
  6. **Faulty perception**
  7. **Escape**
  
- B. **Cure for Elijah’s Depression 19:6-21**
  1. **Regained physical / emotional health**
  2. **Realized his own inadequacy.**
  3. **Restored connection with God**
  4. **Reset his perspective**

**First**, realize I am not out to get you.

**Second**, evaluate your mission.

5. **Revisited his mission with a new perspective**

**First**, I never intended you to do this thing alone in the first place.

**Second**, I have others lined up to continue my work,

**Third**, you are not alone in your fervor for me.

6. **Received an intimate partner**
7. **Returned to ministry**

Following are a few possible timeless principles extracted from the Biblical narrative.

### Possible timeless principle #1

*Strong victories invite serious vulnerabilities.*

*So you who are strong take heed lest you fall.*

It seems that whenever there is a great victory or expenditure of spiritual energy, the enemy swoops in to knock us off our high. How many spiritual “highs” in your life shortly deteriorated into a spiritual low.

Peter rode a spiritual high one moment a tool of God confessing God's will the next a tool of Satan spouting error.

*Jesus said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:15-19*

What a rush. Yet moments later we read this.

*From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Matthew 16:21-23*

Peter's boast of loyalty didn't turn out so well either.

*But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Matthew 26:33*

It turned out that even though the rest took off, only Peter denied connection to Jesus.

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. Proverbs 16:18*

*Now these things (examples of not keeping connected) happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. 1 Corinthians 10:11-12*

*Let us be diligent to enter that rest (faith in God's direction), so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience (as the Israelites refusing to trust God to fulfill His promises). Hebrews 4:11*

*Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3*

*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Galatians 6:1*

*We all have a tendency to try to make the "mountain top" moments last forever. There will come a time when it does but it is clear from Scripture that that time will not come before Jesus comes.*

*Peter told his readers not to be surprised when things turn ugly.*

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 1 Peter 4:12-13*

*When we rivet our focus on perpetuating the good times and protecting ourselves from the bad, we set ourselves up for a fall. We become vulnerable to Satan's suggestions, despair, anger, stress, distraction. Take some time to evaluate your general attitude to difficult circumstances. The term endure has to do with the choice to remain under the difficulty until the necessary lessons are learned or insight gained.*

## **Possible timeless principle #2**

*Past evidence of faith does not prevent future flashes of fear.  
So keep daily connection with God.*

Elijah's life of demonstrated great faith, strong prayer life, listening ear and obedient walk did not prevent his lapse into fear and despair due to lack of connection with God and trust in God's protection and provision. His present circumstances did not present anything he hadn't faced previously. He thought nothing of previous threats to his life even from Jezebel. He camped comfortably for a couple years in her very home town. Not sure where the disconnect happened or why but don't depend on you past history to carry you into your future challenges. Keep a daily connection. Jesus warned the disciples...

*"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41*

After three years of amazing ministry with Jesus and innumerable demonstrations of God's power, all the disciples end up running away in fear shortly after. Fear only breeds more fear so act in faith in His provision and protection. This really is the core principle for evading meltdowns.

*Many times we try to think last year's victories guarantee this year's victories. The exercise of faith must be a lifestyle. Our connection with God must be continual. Jesus clearly instructed us that the key to bearing fruit is solid continual connection to the Vine.*

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5*

*What kind of things stir fear to the point of derailing faith? It is easy to say we trust God but our responses often demonstrate otherwise. Since one source of faith is hearing the Word of God, what are you doing to keep the interaction with the Word regular? What gets in the way? What can you do to deal with the distractions? Are you willing to make a commitment to increased interaction with Scripture?*

### **Possible timeless principle #3**

*The condition of the physical directly influences the condition of the spiritual  
So maintain good physical health practices.*

Although we are not specifically told in the text, Elijah's struggle may have, at least in part, had to do with physical exhaustion. We are intricately integrated beings. The material and immaterial aspects of our makeup powerfully affect each other. It is important to give attention to our physical body. The reality is that God even promises to compensate for the disparity between the two.

*Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is continually being decayed, yet our inner man is continually being renewed day by day. 2 Corinthians 4:16*

Almost everything links back to healthy nutrition and regular exercise.

*Paul addressed physical discipline. He also maintained a balance view that physical discipline had value for the present but spiritual discipline had value not and later.*

*The application here is obvious. What physical issues need attention that could benefit spiritual aspirations?*

### **Possible timeless principle #4**

*Isolation fosters spiritual disintegration  
So maintain meaningful connection with the family of God  
and be open to partner with and intimate friend.*

Elijah had been used to operating alone. His personal connection to God had carried him this far. Yet God did not design us to be alone. In fact, He categorically declared that the fact that it was not good for Adam to be alone. That observation came at a time when Adam lived in a perfect environment and enjoyed a flawless relationship with God. God exists in perfect community. He designed us to function best in community. The problem is that there are so few examples of healthy community. We have all tasted both sides of community;

the painful and pleasurable. That does not cloud the fact that the core of the gospel has to do with restored relationship with God (reconciliation) and energizing relationship with each other.

The New Testament is all about community. Jesus declared that His disciples could be identified by their mutual love. The core of His lengthy prayer to the Father in John 17 has to do with the demonstration of unity.

*“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20-21*

The greatest apologetic of Jesus’ connection to the Father is the unity of His followers. The greatest atrocity of the church is its disunity. The analogy of a physical body to the followers of Jesus perfectly demonstrates the relationship between all the members. Unity -- Diversity – Mutuality. God never intends that we work independently. He designed the body to build itself up in the context of loving relationships.

*Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:15-16*

You can easily discover a whole list of passages that exhort us to help one another. Beyond the need for the entire body to function together, there is in ministry the need for a close partnership. Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs. Paul mentions essential partnership with a number of believers. God’s plan never depends on just one person. So focus on your part in His plan and remember you are NOT alone.

*I will make this simple. Do have someone in your life you would identify as an “intimate” friend? If not, why not? Are you willing to let someone in as scary as that might be? Would you be willing to at least ask God to connect you with someone?*

*On a more general level, how are you connected to other followers of Jesus? Are you trying to make it all on your own? Think some on the function of the operation of our physical body and the principles of Unity, Diversity and Mutuality. How do you see that played out in the body of Christ? What do you observe in the physical body that applies in the body of Christ? Take some time to think about that interaction between members. What happens when those principles are violated? Read 1 Cor 12.*

### **Possible timeless principle #5**

*Deviating from God’s direction leads to confusion and disorientation*

*So determine to hear and heed His direction.*

Somewhere along the line, Elijah acted without specific direction from God.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Proverbs 3:5-8*

I would venture that failure to do so results in a bumpy path, unhealthy flesh and tired bones. This is similar to the connection principle. Sometimes God does not always provide immediate direction operates on the just in time principles. Elijah had been willing to wait for God direction before but this time acted with a “word from the Lord.”

The concept of waiting on God’s timing and direction appears all through the Bible.

*Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day. Psalm 25:4-5*

*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD. Psa 27:13-14*

*My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken. Psalm 62:5-6*

There were consequences for not waiting.

*They (Israel) quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, but craved intensely in the wilderness, And tempted God in the desert. So He gave them their request, but sent a wasting disease among them. Psalm 106:13-15*

*There are three responses to God's direction. Lagging behind. Forging ahead. Prompt obedience. Jesus was clear about the importance of hearing and doing.*

*The whole parable of the storm is about hearing and heading God's direction. Matt 7:42-17*

*True relationship with Jesus has to do with hearing and heading God's direction. Matt 12:50*

*James reinforced the principle of hearing and doing. James 1:19-27*

*Here are some additional passages than the above about trusting or waiting on God's movement.*

*Ps 37:7-9; Ps 39:7; Ps 119:74, 114; Ps 130:5; Is 40:31; Mic 7:7*

Until we get specific direction operate from the general direction of revealed wisdom.

### **Possible timeless principle #6**

*Failure or lapses don't always disqualify from ministry.*

*So get back up and keep engaged in kingdom service.*

There are times when our actions or choice can disqualify us for continued service.

*Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:26-27*

God definitely disqualified Ananias and Sapphira from further service. However, all it takes is one quick reading of Hebrews 11 examples of people God utilized to really further His plan and you realize that all of them operated with serious flaws and failures. Assume that if you are still breathing, God still has work for you to do.

*Do you feel like God as pulled you from the game? Do you think God only uses perfect people? The reality is that He only works with imperfect people because that is ALL He has to work with.*

### **Possible timeless principle #7**

*Perspective determines outlook*

*So maintain an eternal perspective on temporal circumstances*

At the core of Elijah's depression was a faulty perception of God and life.

He perceived the whole nation was out to get him.

He perceived that God expected him to do everything single handedly.

He perceived that no one else exhibited his passion for spiritual fidelity.

He perceived it was all up to him.

He perceived that he was finished and God should take him out.

None of these things were true.

How many time do we nurse certain perceptions that are faulty? God is mad at me. God promises a pain free life. This wouldn't have happened if I had enough faith or hadn't fallen. God seems silent so I must be on my own. It is up to me to accomplish this task. I am responsible to grow the church or stimulate revival. We must assume that no matter the circumstance we face, the sovereign God, because he allowed it, has some eternal purpose for it in me, through me or for me.

*I your perspective causes hopelessness or helplessness you have probably succumbed to a faulty bent. If your perspective is negative, it is probably a faulty one. Read Paul's perspective on a number of negative things in Philippians 1. His eternal perspective enabled him to see positives even in the negatives. Contemplate some of the "negatives" in your life and view them from an eternal perspective (what is God doing?). How does that change the outlook?*

### **Possible timeless principle #8**

*God knows all about our frailty*

*So humble yourselves casting all your care on Him.*

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7*

Focus on the fact that God ALWAYS acts in love toward us. Not matter what it looks like HE CARES FOR YOU.

Paul realize that God does His most powerful work through weak people.

*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." 1 Corinthians 1:26-31*

*And the LORD has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties,*

Many aren't content with ANY discomfort.

*God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure (glory of Christ) in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:6-11*

What frailty or difficult circumstance are we willing to endure to that the life of the glorious Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. Again, check your attitude toward negative events.

### **CONCLUSION**

Think about where you are in your life in relation to God. I ask you what the Lord asked Elijah, “What are you doing here?”

Are you in a place where God has directed you?

Are you running from some uncomfortable situation?

Have you given up on trying to live pleasing to the Lord.

Here is my prayer for us inspired by Paul’s prayer for the followers of Jesus in Colossae. I give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you, recognizing your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which came to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; Colossians 1:3-6

For this reason also, I ask You Father that we may be filled with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that we together will walk in a manner worthy of the You, to please You in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of You; strengthened with all power by Your Holy Spirit , according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to You Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the community of Your followers upon whom who have shinned Your glorious Light and reflect Your light in a dark world.  
Colossians 1:9-12