

No person has to stay in a mood of distress and depression. Although the way seems dark and dreary, it does not have to consume him. Elijah met God on Mount Horeb and there he conversed with his Creator. While depression focuses on negatives things and deceives a person, thankfully Elijah met God on the mountain. Here are six ways to help depressive bouts.

Observe others. When you feel blue, read about the efforts of the Red Cross. When you question the point of life, visit a nursing home. When you find yourself pondering the negatives, remember the positives. Depression focuses on self, while overcoming it demands a look at others. Ask:[4]

- Is there a real cause?
- Have others more cause but have less worry?
- Have I not also a reason to be encouraged?

A look at reality and others will help us overcome the distress we have.

Eat (1 Kings 19:5-7). Elijah was told to eat--twice! He was given carbohydrates which is exactly what aids the mind when in depressive states. Food often makes a man joyous (Psalm 104:15; cf. Proverbs 25:16), so he should eat!

Talk to God (1 Kings 19:9). Outward expressions of inward disturbances result in spiritual renewals. God's ear heard Elijah's cry. Talking to God about your struggles is important. Victor Hugo wrote, "Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake."

Know you are not alone (1 Kings 19:5, 7, 11-13, 19-21). Elijah was not alone, for God and the 7,000 faithful ones were with him. This is some of the best medicine (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Understand the reality of things (1 Kings 19:18). Elijah he assumed he was alone! Did he forget? Did he not want to remember? Elijah needed to be reminded that he could do the work of God and was successful. Reality checks are an important part in overcoming our fears. We need to think about things that are true (Philippians 4:8).

Get back to work (1 Kings 19:15-16). God commanded Elijah to "Go." Since depression results in a lost of interest in activities, overcoming its weights demand that one get back to normal activities. God gave Elijah three tasks. If we feel down, we need to get back to being involved in:

- *Evangelism* (Mark 16:15). Hand out tracts, ask people to come to services, or better yet, have a Bible study with someone.
- *Social and Biblical events.* Game nights, fellowship meals, lectureships, and Polishing the Pulpit are great ways to rejuvenate the fire.
- *Study.* Study a book you haven't yet, embark on a study you have not yet, or write articles.
- *Setting long term goals.* Maybe you set a goal to study with one new person every month. Maybe you like to help young people; so, you have them over for a devo and games every other month. Perhaps you set out to write a book this year! What about taking on a mentor like Elijah?

If we have ceased doing the work of the Lord, then it is time to get back up and get to work (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Elijah faced deep depression, but it didn't stay that way. Thankfully, Elijah went to the mountain. Have you left the tree and gone to the mountain?

We need to realize that life is not going to be perfect. We should expect trials and afflictions. Recognition of this and the determination to fix it, will only result in us overcoming of depression. Everyone faces depression from time to time, but lingering depression only harms our spiritual life. The only way we to get out from under the juniper tree is to get up and look up. Have you?

Endnotes

[1]<https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/d/depression.htm>

[2]<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8481605/>

[3]Some of the six points from Jack McNeil and other sources not listed.

[4] Three questions from Allen Webster

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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE SITTING UNDER A JUNIPER TREE

NOAH OLSON

“In 1835 a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat, and he avoided his friends. The doctor examined him and found that he was in prime physical condition. Concluding that his patient needed to have a good time, the physician told him about a circus in town and its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi. Night after night he had the people rolling in the aisles. ‘You must go and see him,’ the doctor advised. ‘Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown. He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness.’ ‘No,’ replied the despairing man, ‘he can't help me. you see, I am Grimaldi!’”[1]

Feel sad? Experiencing a loss of interest in daily activities? Growing increasingly anxious or maybe even having trouble concentrating? Ever asked “what is the point of life,” “why do I feel this way,” or “why am I even trying?” Such symptoms are common signs of one of the world's most common emotional disorders--depression.

One said that depression is the common cold of the mind. The causes of depression are unique among individuals and according to the World Health Organization, about 5% of adults struggle with it. The Bible gives us plenty of examples of faithful followers who struggled with it, like perhaps Moses, David, and Elijah. Specifically, Elijah faced such a battle after one of his greatest victories (1 Kings 18). From his situation we learn that sometimes God's faithful struggle. While depression's depths do not define a person, it is how one overcomes or falls to it that does. Like David, let us take a mental health check and examine, “Why art thou cast down O my soul?” (Psalm 42:11). Here are three things you can do when you find yourself under a juniper tree.

Ask What Caused it (1 Kings 19:1-4).

Depression is not without cause and as with any illnesses, finding the cause leads to triumph. There were many things that caused Elijah's distress:

Fear (1 Kings 19:1-3). Jezebel's death warrant was sure to stir anxiety in the heart of Elijah. He ran for his life-- 95 miles to Beersheba! Fear of inadequacy, fear of the unknown, or fear of certain inflictors in life can cause one to fall into the same distressed state. Fearfulness can cause a man to doubt, do things he would not normally do, overthink, or have physical maladies. Truly, “Anxiety in man's heart weighs him down” (Proverbs 12:25).

Lack of self-confidence (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah said “I *am* not better than my fathers.” Feelings of worthlessness, unsuccessfulness, and low self-esteem can cause a man to become depressed. Perhaps it was the person we study with failed to respond to the Gospel and we feel at fault. Maybe we fall to the same mistake continually. When the righteous are not as bold as lions (Proverbs 28:1), they become weary like elephants. No confidence, means more distress.

Feeling of loneliness (1 Kings 19:10). Loneliness is a real feeling. Aloneness is harmful. Forsaking is detrimental. Although it was false, Elijah assumed he was alone. He must not have known about Obadiah's hiding of God's prophets (1 Kings 18:4). Many who feel lonely and are alone often can find themselves in depressive states. “Does anyone care about me?” “Am I important to anyone?” “Do people think that I still exist?” These questions are common but are evident of distress. Elijah felt lonely, which led to depression.

When we find life is hard (Numbers 11:14) our surroundings dark, and our spirits drowning, we do not have to stay--we can look up, by asking what caused it.

Examine the Symptoms (1 Kings 19:5-8).

Charles Spurgeon said, “There are dungeons beneath the castles of despair.” Abraham Lincoln said, “I am now the most miserable man living.” Feelings of lethargy, loss of interest in activities, and physical ailments may be proof of such a struggle. Examining the symptoms of such a battle will help us overcome it. What are the symptoms?

Aloneness (1 Kings 19:4). Seclusion is evidence for a depressive state. Elijah went to the wilderness and left his servant in Jezreel. While “alone time” is good, for long periods of time, it can be harmful. In fact, depressive states demand socialization for spiritual increase and fervor comes in numbers (Proverbs 27:17; Hebrews 10:24-25; James 5:16).

Desire to die (1 Kings 19:4). 87% of completed suicides are due to major depressive disorder.[2] The desire to give up is not uncommon (Numbers 11:14-15; Job 3:20-22; Jeremiah 20:14-18; Jonah 4:3, 8), but acting upon such is (Matthew 27:3-5). Some think death ends the battle; however, taking one's life:

- Prohibits one from fulfilling God's plan for a person.
- Hurts one's family and friends.
- Shows failure instead of victory.

While death may seem a like a better escape, it is far better to struggle now and wait for the glory later (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Philippians 1:21-24).

A refrain from eating (1 Kings 19:5-8). The angel's directive to Elijah implies that he had ceased from eating, which is a common symptom of depression. During hard times, fasting is good, but not for long.

Irregular sleeping (1 Kings 19:5-6). Elijah slept under the juniper tree--twice! Rest is needed, but not too much. Depression is noticed when people sleep too much or too little, and can even result in insomnia.

Cessation of certain activities (1 Kings 19:8). Elijah took a break from preaching and went into Mount Horeb which was 150-200 miles from Beersheba. Take breaks, but not for too long. Depression turns breaks into lifestyles, which when under the umbrella of Christian service, is not good.

Elijah fell into a state of worry and depression as to many today. God was not through with him yet, as He is not through with the many today, if we will just listen to “the word of the Lord.”

Find the Cures (1 Kings 19).[3]