

Small Group & Personal Bible Study

Pastor Dennis Hadley

Memory Verse: Matthew 11:28

“Come to me, all you are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Discovery Bible Study Lesson

1. Read and then write down the passage found in Matthew 12:28-30
2. Next, rewrite Matthew 12:28-30 using your own words
3. What do you discover about Jesus from this passage? What do you discover about yourself in this passage?
4. What does God want you to do to obey this passage?

Daily Reading:

Day 1: 1 Kings 17:1-6

Day 2: 1 Kings 17:7-24

Day 3: 1 Kings 18:1-15

Day 4: 1 Kings 18:16-46

Day 5: 1 Kings 19:1-18

Lesson: “I’ve had enough, Lord” (God in the Quietness)

1. What is the danger in using emotions as the measure of a successful Christian life?
2. Do true Christians ever become depressed? If they do, is it a sign of unbelief or lack of faith? If they don't, is it a mark of righteousness or spiritual maturity? Why or why not?
3. Quote: “God does not give up on us nearly as easily as we give up on Him!” (Dennis Bratcher)
What is your opinion of that statement?
4. What do you learn about God in the story of Elijah found in 1 Kings 19:1-18?
5. What do you learn about people, even Christian leaders, from the story of Elijah as found in 1 Kings 19:1-18

To assist you with some additional thoughts on this week's study I have included a very good commentary on 1 Kings 19:1-18 from Dennis Bratcher. I hope you find this interesting and insightful.

God in the Quietness: Reflections on 1 Kings 19:1-18

1. A very human hero (19:1-5)

As with most narratives in the Old Testament, the Elijah stories were meant to be heard on two levels. We should not focus solely on the surface of this story and hear only the personal inner turmoil of Elijah. If we listen intently, on a deeper level, the story is about God and the working out of His purposes in the history of His people.

We like heroes and heroines. We like people who do impossible things or overcome great odds. The hero ideal views people in terms of fame, influence, and accomplishments and calls us to follow them in success. In one sense, we need heroes to inspire us. Yet, a hero model can lead to superficial perceptions and unrealistic expectations of other people, and of ourselves.

It is easy to view persons in the Bible as heroes and see them as somehow removed from the normal problems of human existence. If we do, we risk missing the message that addresses the real life questions all of us face every day.

Elijah had just experienced a dramatic climax to his ministry in his confrontation with the worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel (ch.18). That spectacular revelation of God in the fire on Mount Carmel would remain the most sensational triumph of his career. In our view, he walked away from Mount Carmel a hero.

But chapter nineteen is not very heroic. Jezebel would not give up so easily. She vowed to kill this troublesome prophet of God. Elijah feared for his life. So he ran. Here we see Elijah as a very ordinary human being. The hero of Mount Carmel quickly became the despondent loner crying, "I've had enough!" (v. 4). **What happened to Elijah?**

In many areas of life, great victories are often followed by times of doubt, discouragement, and depression. Emotional stress, physical fatigue, individual personalities, body chemistry, genetic makeup, and other factors can sometimes combine to bring on the "blues" or even deeper depression. Most often, these feelings are totally unrelated to our spiritual commitment. **They are simply the result of being human.**

People committed to God are not immune to being human. Whether positive or negative, emotions are part of that humanity. Our emotions are plugged into the biological and chemical parts of our bodies and so are often uncontrollable. That is why using our human emotions as a yardstick for our spiritual condition is hazardous. Feeling good and being happy are not always good measures of commitment to God. Likewise, feeling depressed, discouraged, anxious, doubtful, feeling like "I've had enough," are not necessarily signs of spiritual relapse.

2. God meets human need (19:6-8)

Elijah had given up. He left his country in the north and traveled south. When he got to the border of Israel at Beersheba, he kept going and abandoned God's land for the desert. The dismissal of his servant suggests that he was giving up his prophetic vocation as well (vv.3-4). Finally, Elijah went to sleep, often a symbol for impending death in ancient times. The story tells us that Elijah's emotions have pushed him to the brink of despair.

God does not give up on us nearly as easily as we give up on Him! God came to Elijah in the desert in the midst of his despair. While Elijah may have had enough of God, God had not yet had enough of Elijah!

The word translated "angel" in the Hebrew simply means *messenger* (v. 5). Often the bible uses *messenger* as a way to describe the presence of God himself (Judges 2:1; Isaiah 63:9). Sometimes God's messengers were human beings who served God's purposes (2 Chron 36:15).

The *messenger* here need not be the winged supernatural creature we are used to seeing in medieval paintings. The messenger could just as easily have been a faithful human servant of God whom He led to that forsaken place to minister to Elijah. Miracles are not measured by how fantastic and unexplainable and *supernatural* they are. Sometimes the miracle is simply God meeting us at a moment of need. We don't know the exact method God used. But clearly, in His own way, God ministered to the needs of His despondent prophet. I have never encountered a winged angel. But more than once, in times of discouragement and need, I have met a messenger of God who fed me!

The two feedings serve to underscore the depth of Elijah's depression. Later God questioned him twice (vv. 9, 13) and Elijah responded with the same negative answer both times (10, 14). In his state of emotional distress, Elijah was not very responsive to God. But God was patient with Elijah. God did what was necessary to bring him to a place where he could respond.

God is not the kind of God who beats us into submission. He does not coerce our response to him or force our loyalty. That is our decision. But he will work to bring us to a position where we *can* respond to him.

Sometimes He may work in unusual or unexpected ways. Sometimes He may work through very ordinary people in everyday circumstances. But He will work, calling us to response.

As Elijah journeyed toward Horeb he still had not fully recovered from his emotional valley. But he was moving. Sometimes that is enough. We cannot always expect a "quick fix" to our discouragements. The healing may be slow. Sometimes beginning the process is enough.

3. God's silent voice (19:9-18)

Here is the heart of the story. In these verses, the story moves beyond Elijah and his personal needs to that deeper level that addresses the question of how God works in our world. God was still willing to work with Elijah. God's persistent questions gently pushed Elijah toward a faithful response. Before Elijah responded, though, he learned something crucial about God.

Mount Horeb, where Elijah found himself after his long journey through the desert, was the very mountain where Moses had encountered God in the fire of a burning bush (Exodus 3:1f). It was at that mountain, also called Mount Sinai, that God had given the law to Moses amid fire, smoke, and thunder (Exodus 19:16f).

The very name Horeb or Sinai evoked images of a powerful and awesome God who strode boldly into history overthrowing kingdoms and working fantastic miracles before the people's eyes. Elijah was on that very mountain of God where it all started. We would expect a new overwhelming revelation to Elijah that would convince him of God's power. But he did not find God in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. Elijah did not even come out of his cave to witness those things. It was an unseen, soft sound that drew Elijah to a point where he could finally respond to God.

We are not told what the gentle sound was. It's not important. The contrast is clear. God is not always in the loud and showy events of history. God had brought fire from the sky on Mount Carmel. Yet, that is not the only way God works in our world. Sometimes He is heard unexpectedly in the soft and subtle sounds of life, as we are gently drawn to listen. We must be willing to listen, intently.

Many today would have us hear God only in the fantastic and sensational actions of God. They ask us to demand miracles from God daily, even hourly. Their measure of God at work in the world is the number and magnitude of fantastic miracles.

God has acted, continues to act, and will act in marvelous ways in our world. Sometimes He works in wonderful miracles of healing or deliverance. But not always. Not even usually. Most of us will never see the fire fall like it did on Mount Carmel. If we only look for God in those things, we may miss Him in the quiet, ordinary, unseen, gentle sounds in our life. Maybe that's why so many missed the birth of a carpenter's son in a cow stall.

God called Elijah back to involvement with the nitty-gritty things of life. He was still God's prophet. He would anoint kings and stir up rebellion against Ahab and Jezebel. God was at work in the world. Much of it was done through the efforts of a restored Elijah and his apprentice Elisha.

God is at work in unseen ways in our world, not just in the spectacular. Where we may see only one prophet who does spectacular feats, God has seven thousand servants who quietly do his work in the world (v. 18). **How does God work in our world?** This story does not have all the answers. It does have one. **God works through ordinary men and women who serve him in the nitty-gritty areas of life.** God often speaks silently through people who not long before were ready to give up. There are more miracles wrought where our humanity meets God's grace than this world dreams of!