

I feel depressed. How often in life haven't you said or thought those words? Depression is the number one health problem in the world. It has been called the common cold of emotional illness. Some people are depressed all the time. Even great Christians, great saints get depressed.

Elijah was such an example. Elijah was a tremendous spokesman for God. For years, he had been God's mouthpiece to the nation of Israel. All kinds of miracles took place during his ministry. For instance, Elijah had taken on the priests of Baal in a duel. The duel was that whoever's offering was consumed by fire, that person was the leader of the True God. Well anyway, the priests of Baal cut their wrists, bled, but no fire from heaven for their offering. But when Elijah called out to the true God, fire came from heaven, consumed his offering, even the water he had doused on his offering. Afterward 450 priests of Baal were executed. Elijah was on top of the world. He was declared the winner.

But there was one person who did not like Elijah. That was the queen of Israel at this time. She was a very wicked woman. You have heard her name before -- Jezebel. Jezebel did not like Elijah because Elijah had so much influence. In the Scripture, she says, in essence, "If I don't have Elijah killed within twenty-four hours, I'm ready to kill myself."

Here's Elijah, who had been fearless for three years, and one woman threatens his life and he becomes frightened. He turns and runs out to the edge of the desert and gets depressed. v. 3 says *"Elijah was afraid and he ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah he left his servant there while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree and sat down under it and prayed that he might die."* He was depressed. *"I have had enough Lord," he said. "Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors."* Elijah was a prime candidate for depression. He was physically tired. He was emotionally exhausted. Somebody had threatened his life. He was an emotional fruit basket at this point. The interesting thing about Elijah is in the book of James, in the New Testament, in 5:17 it says *"Elijah was a man just like us."* What does that mean? That means he had the same problems we do. He had a problem with depression.

What eventually pulled him out of his depression was the still small voice of God. So today lets learn how to Beat Depression with a Still Small Voice!

Let's find out first why Elijah got depressed? Elijah got depressed because he played four mental games that everyone of us play when we get depressed. His first mistake is the same mistake we make when we get depressed. We focus on our feelings rather than the facts. That always happens when we're depressed. We focus on how we feel rather than reality. Elijah felt like a failure. Because of one little incident, he got afraid and ran. Then he started condemning himself. "I'm such a coward. What am I doing running." He felt like a failure so he said, "I must be a failure." The truth is that feelings are not facts. They are highly unreliable.

I don't always feel close to God and you don't either. That doesn't mean I'm far away from Him. I don't always feel like a Christian, but I am one. Feelings lie! When you focus on your feelings rather than the facts you're going to get in trouble. The Bible says not get in touch with your feelings, but get in touch with the truth. It's the truth that sets you free.

Some of you are depressed this morning because you're living by your feelings instead of the promises of God. You say, "I feel overwhelmed and I feel hopeless, therefore the problem must be impossible to solve." That's illogical. You may say, "I feel like God is far away, therefore He must be mad at me." Not true. Maybe you're saying, "I feel inadequate, therefore I must be worthless." That's not true. Don't focus on your feelings. Focus on the facts. The Bible says, *"The truth sets you free."*

The second mistake we make in depression we compare ourselves to others. Elijah said, *"Take my life. I'm no better than my ancestors."* Inevitably, in counseling people will say "If I could just be like ... then it would be ok." When you start comparing yourself to other people, you are asking for trouble. The Bible says over and over, Don't do it! Don't compare yourself. There's only one person that you can be and that is you. If you try to imitate other people and be

like them, you're just going to get depressed. Everybody's unique and the only person you can be is you. That's all God wants. That's all He expects. When I get to heaven, God isn't going to say, "Mark, why weren't you like Billy Graham?" or "Mark, why weren't you like Moses?" He wants you to be you, because He made you that way.

The third mistake we make in getting ourselves depressed is we blame ourselves for negative events that aren't our fault. v. 10 Elijah said *"Lord, I have been very zealous for the Lord God almighty. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant and broken down Your altars and put Your prophets to death with a sword."* He said, "I have worked my tail off for three years and they're not any closer to God than before. I have really tried. I've been zealous but what did they do? They're still living the same way." In his depression, Elijah blamed himself for failing to change the nation. He took it personally. When we do that, we get depressed. Any time you help people, you sooner or later realize that people do not always respond the way you'd like them to. Your children, your friends, your husband, your wife, people you work for or people who work for you. People just don't always respond the way you want them to. You can't assume responsibility for their response. You can influence people, but you cannot control them. The final decision is their's. So don't get yourself depressed over something you cannot control. That's what Elijah did.

4. The fourth mistake he made is in the second part of verse 10. We exaggerate the negative. *"I am the only one left and now they're trying to kill me too."* Poor me! Elijah is having a pity party. Everybody's against me! The fact was, everybody wasn't against him. There was only one person -- one woman. But he didn't look at it that way. Why? Because when we're depressed, we always exaggerate the negative. Instead of saying, "I made a mistake" we say, "I'm a total failure". Instead of saying, "I accidentally tripped" we say, "I'm a klutz!" Instead of saying, "I ate too much", we say, "I'm a pig!" We label ourselves with titles that only make it worse. If you're depressed, the world is going to pot. Everything is going to the dogs. The fact is, Elijah wasn't the only one. In v. 18 *"Look. There's 7000 prophets who still haven't given in to the false, pagan religion."* There are plenty other people. But Elijah exaggerated it. **WHAT IS GOD'S REMEDY FOR ELIJAH'S DEPRESSION?** It's the same remedy for your depression. 1. Take care of your physical needs. v 5 *"Then Elijah lay down under the tree and he fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and he drank and he lay down again. Then the angel of the Lord came a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat again. The journey is too much for you.' So he got up and he ate and he drank and he was strengthened by the food."*

God's remedy for Elijah's depression was rest and food and relaxation. Sometimes a good night's sleep does wonders for your attitude. When you're physically tired, fatigued, mentally drained, physically exhausted you're prone to depression. The thing I like about this is God dealt so tenderly with Elijah. This guy had just copped out. Yet God did not come to him scolding him, "You coward! What are you doing over here on the desert." He didn't put him down. He didn't criticize him. He didn't condemn him. What he did was give him some food and some rest. He got him restored physically. That was the starting point. Maybe if you're depressed, the starting point for you is to get your life in shape physically. Maybe you just need to watch your diet. Maybe you need to get more sleep. Maybe you need to force yourself to exercise for an hour a day.

2. Don't suppress your frustrations; tell them to God. v. 9-10 *"Then Elijah went into a cave and he spent the night and the word of the Lord came to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I've been zealous for the Lord God almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down the altars, put all your prophets to death by the sword. I'm the only one left and now they're trying to kill me too.'"*

He just poured out all of his inner feelings. God let him let off steam. God was not shocked. God says, "When you're uptight, let Me hear your inner emotions. I already know what they are. I'm not going to be shocked by them." He allowed Elijah to express pent up emotions without criticizing him or condemning him. Sometimes it helps to have a Christian friend to share with. It's a catharsis, a cleansing, a venting. All that stuff that's been pushed down inside is going to cause depression. Either find a friend to share them with or just tell them to the Lord. Don't repress it or express or suppress it, confess it to the Lord.

3. Then Listen to the Still small voice of God. v. 11 *"The Lord said to Elijah, '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 mountain 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 wasn't in the earthquake either. And after the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord wasn't in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper and when Elijah heard it, he put his cloak over his face. [He knew it was the Lord.] And he went out and he stood in the mouth of the cave."*

Where is help going to come for your depression? Will it come from buying a powerful new automobile? Will it come from buying a new outfit, or eating some great meals at a fancy restaurant? No, the help comes from the Word of God in the Bible.

If you're depressed, get your Bible and go down by the ocean or by the lake or out in the country and sit down and read the Bible. Get alone with God and just let God love you. Let Him speak to you. Let Him meet your needs. When we're depressed, we think God is a million miles away. But He's not. He's still just as close to you when you don't feel Him as when you do.

So what are you depressed about. Is it some guilt that you are carrying around from the past. Some stupid thing you did. Jesus says "Son, Daughter, be of Good cheer, your sins are forgiven! Listen to the still small voice. You are forgiven! Maybe you feel depressed because you think, "I don't like myself. I don't like myself at all!" Jesus said, "I didn't create you for nothing. You are worthwhile, significant. You're special. There's value to your life." Listen to His voice. You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy people." Are you basing your value on the opinions of other people? As a result then, when anybody criticizes you, condemns you, puts you down, disapproves of you, or simply doesn't express appreciation, you're going to get depressed. That's what Elijah did. He said "I've had enough. They don't appreciate me." He got depressed. Listen to the voice of God. Base your opinion on yourself by what He says about you. The Bible says, While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." You were extremely valuable to God, enough for his Son to die for you. God will help you make the changes in your thoughts so that you don't think like the world does, but you think the Truth. The truth will set you free. It is time for God to give to you a new purpose and a new direction in your life. v. 15 *"The Lord came to Elijah and said, 'Go back the way you came and go to the desert of Damascus and when you get there here's what I want you to do.'" He said, "I want you to anoint ... this king, that king." God gave him a new assignment. He put him back to work.*

The quickest way to defeat depression is to quit sitting around in self pity, get your eyes off yourself and start looking at the needs of other people. Get involved in their lives and get a ministry where you are giving out and God is giving to you. When you're looking at yourself, you're going to get discouraged. Jesus said, "Lose your life to find it." Get involved in helping others. God gave Elijah a new job. He said, "I'm not through with you and the job that I'm giving you is going to help people." He has given you a job to do as well. Jesus will help you. He will change you. You're not alone. He cares about you. I care about you. There are people sitting around you who care about you. Defeat Depression with Just a Still Small Voice!