

**Introduction**

Unfulfilled dreams, a lousy job, failed relationships...it's enough to make you depressed. Depression, a sadness so deep in the soul that it practically paralyzes you, grinding your life to a halt. We have all experienced it and for some it is even a continual way of living while others deal with lifelong clinical depression. In the scriptures, we see that even the greatest believers suffered bouts of depression, including Jesus himself. Elijah was a prophet who had just defeated the wicked Prophets of Baal and now had a price put on his head by King Ahab. He exhibits the classic signs of depression: a desire to sleep the problem away, a wish to die and a questioning of God's purposes. As Jesus is about to be betrayed we see him in the throes of depression as well, contemplating the agonies of the cross. From Proverbs and Romans, we have two brief statements about relating to those we know who are depressed. How do we escape depression and how should we comfort those who are afflicted?

**1 Kings 19:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." <sup>3</sup> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup> while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, 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." <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." <sup>6</sup> 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 drank and then lay down again.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." <sup>8</sup> So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>9</sup> 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?" <sup>10</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken 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." <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> 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?"

**Mark 14:32-42**

<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

<sup>35</sup> Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> "Abba, [L] Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

<sup>37</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

<sup>39</sup> Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. <sup>40</sup> When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

<sup>41</sup> Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

**Proverbs 25:20**

Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.

**Romans 12:15**

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

## Questions

1. What were some of Elijah's attitudes about himself as well as actions that may have contributed to his depression?
2. In 1 Kings 19:12, Elijah hears the gentle whisper, the "still, small voice" of God. Why do you think this is what got Elijah through his depression and not the other more dramatic demonstrations of God's power? Relate how God has spoken to you as you have experienced depression?
3. In Mark 14:40, the disciples did not know what to say to Jesus to help him through his depression. Why were they so helpless? What would you like others to say to you when you are depressed?
4. What do Proverbs 25:20 and Romans 12:15 teach us about helping others cope with depression that may run counter to what Christians often do in these circumstances?

### Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.