

Intro

"The occupational hazard of Christian discipleship and ministry is discouragement." John Stott

Pastoral Stats - <https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>

57% of pastors feel fulfilled but yet discouraged, stressed, and fatigued.

70% of pastors report they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.

35% of pastors battle depression or fear of inadequacy.

75% of pastors report significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.

80% of pastors expect conflict within their church.

45% of pastors spend 10-15 hours a week on sermon preparation.

85% of pastors report the use of the internet and other resources have improved their study time compared to when they first started their ministry.

The profession of "Pastor" is near the bottom of a survey of the most-respected professions, just above "car salesman".

Many denominations are reporting an "Empty Pulpit Crisis". They do not have a shortage of ministers but have a shortage of ministers desiring to fill the role of a pastor.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/october/that-stat-that-says-pastors-are-all-miserable-and-want-to-q.html>

80% of pastors feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastor.

50% of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.

70% of pastors constantly fight depression.

These stats can help explain why about 250 ministers leave the ministry each month and why a great and mighty man like Elijah can ask the Lord to take his life

While some causes of depression range from abuse, certain medications, conflict, death, genetics, major event life changes, illness this isn't the case here with Elijah. We'll examine some of the reasons for his depression

Those servants of God who got discouraged

1 Elijah's discouragement came at the cost of doing God's will

2 Jonah's discouragement came at the cost of NOT doing the will of God

3 The Psalmist's discouragement came because of trials

4 Timothy seems to have had doubts, discouragement and insecurities in his ministry at Ephesus and so for this reason Paul wrote him two letters called 1 & 2 Timothy

Some common denominators in these men

1 God didn't cause the depression – it was man's response

2 their depression came for different reasons

Outline

V1,2 - Jezebel's threat

V3,4 – Elijah's retreat/fear

V4 – Elijah's request

V5-7 – Angel's resource

V8-14 – Lord's reasoning

V15-18 – Elijah's recommission

V19-21 – Elijah's return to the Lord's work

Text

V1,2 - Jezebel's threat

- We have here Ahab the tattletale and Jezebel the monster
- At the end of chapter 18 after the Lord rained fire down on Elijah's sacrifice and consumed Elijah said to take the prophets of Baal and destroyed them
- These were Jezebel's prophets
- Now she has vowed revenge on Elijah

V3,4 – Elijah's retreat/fear

- Upon hearing this Elijah runs for his life
- He saw, arose, went for his life
- Some translations have this words "he saw" as he was afraid
- Fear will make us run from situations
- How far did he run?
- But now at the news that Jezebel the monster is after him he goes from Jezreel too Beersheba which is a journey of 80 to 100 miles with his servant. He goes to the southern part of Judah.
- Elijah went from disappointment to discouragement to depression
- Its hard to imagine such a powerhouse for God getting depressed but he did
- What words describe Elijah here? Fear, discouragement,

V4 – Elijah's request

- Fear made Elijah run for his life but unfortunately worse than that it made him want to stop living
- We don't know but maybe he had the kind of temperament that was either it's all or nothing and if he didn't get the results he wanted then he would just quit
- It's an unusual request for Elijah to ask the Lord for this and we'll discuss some of the reasons shortly

V5-7 – Angel's resource

- The Lord does something unusual and send an angel to help Elijah and encourage him
- The angel touched him, spoke to him and fed him
- Elijah ate and here it says the angel of the Lord did the same thing again
- The Lord isn't only interested in Elijah's spiritual condition but also his physical condition. Elijah is told to eat because the journey is too great
- Elijah needs his strength and energy to do God's will

V8 – Elijah goes 40 days and 40 nights in the strength of that good to Horeb

- It's significant Elijah goes to Mt Horeb, the Mountain of God. This is where Moses received his calling from the Lord when he was taking care of Jethro's sheep
- Another name for Mt Horeb is Mt Sinai
- At least Elijah knows a place to go to where God has spoken to his people in the past

V9-14 – Lord's reasoning

- He comes to a cave perhaps thinking this is a place to hide and be alone
- When were discouraged or depressed the last thing we need is to be alone
- Here in these verses we start to get to the core of Elijah's discouragement and depression
- Here in this cave the Lord begins to reason with Elijah
- Isaiah 1:18 "Come let us reason together says the Lord" to Israel
- This reasoning involves questioning

V15-18 – Elijah’s recommission

- The Lord gave Elijah something to do
- This rebound is apparently going to take Elijah some time to get through and work through, So God here gives Elijah something to do
 - Anoint Hazael (to be king of Syria) – he didn’t do it – Elisha did (2 Kings 8:12,13)
 - Anoint Jehu (to be king of Israel) – he didn’t do it – Elisha did (2 Kings 9:12,13)
 - Anoint Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21) – he did do this.
- Elisha would become Elijah’s servant, minister and replacement
- Instead of Elijah being selfish and living in self-pity God gave him someone to pour his life into

V19-21 – Elijah’s return to the Lord’s work

- Here he goes and finds Elisha to be his protégé and disciple
- He didn’t need a prayer meeting he needed something to do

Elijah’s Discouragement

1 Improper expectation - He expected better results

- Sometimes we expect results that just aren’t realistic
- We have unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others
- I heard MacArthur say many pastors leave the ministry because they enter into ministry with unrealistic expectations. This plays into one of the stats I read
- David said my expectation is from the Lord (Ps 62:5)

2 Comparison – he thought he wasn’t better than his fathers

- God didn’t ask Elijah to be better than his fathers
- The Lord doesn’t ask us to be better than someone else but to be the best we can be for him through him and his grace

3 Exhaustion

- He outran Ahab from Mt Carmel to Jezreel – about 30 miles. Ahab was in a chariot
- Elijah then goes from Jezreel to Beersheba – which is about 80-100 miles.
- Then Elijah goes Beersheba to Mt Horeb/Mt Sinai – a 40 day journey

4 Thought he was the only one serving God

- When people go through trials they have a tendency to feel like they’re the only one going through this and no one can understand
- Elijah thought he was the only one – the Lord told him there were yet 7,000 others
- In chapter 22 of this book the Lord uses another prophet named Micaiah the son of Imlah

5 Focused on self

- A part of Elijah’s over problem is he was thinking of himself too much

6 Fear

- Elijah feared for his life
- The same man who boldly went to Ahab in chapter 17 and 18 is now afraid of Jezebel
- Fear will make us irrational.
- Paul Timothy God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear but of love, power and sound mind (2 Tim 1:7)

7 Irrational thinking

- Not thinking clearly because of improper expectations, comparison, exhaustion, thinking you’re the only one and fear.

8 Focused on results

- Perhaps another part of Elijah’s depression is due to the fact that Elijah had great success in all that he did. He did powerful miracles at that. The Lord blessed all he did. His word prevented rain, the widow woman’s barrel of oil never failed for the three years of the drought, he raised the widow woman’s son, the Lord rained down fire from heaven on Elijah’s sacrifice and sent rain but now he’s afraid of Jezebel. Maybe he had hoped the Lord would turn the heart of Ahab and Jezebel and when they didn’t turn to the Lord he didn’t have the result he wanted

Any one of these things can discourage and depress the child of God

Conclusion

- ~ A bout of discouragement can come on us at unexpected timing
- ~ Discouragement can get a hold of God's greatest servants
- ~ May we not judge those who struggle with discouragement. If we aren't given to this struggle we should thank God every day because it's a struggle we want no part of
- ~ The Lord had some answers for Elijah's discouragement and depression

God's answer for Elijah's discouragement when the journey is too great

- 1 God sent an angel – the angel is to be an encourager and helper to Elijah
 - Paul told the Corinthians he was a helper of their joy – this is what the angel was to Elijah
 - In the NT we have the HS who is our comforter who walks with us and teaches us
- 2 The angel fed him – this shows God's care and concern for Elijah's physical body
 - The Lord was concerned with Elijah's physical strength because so often the physical influences our spiritual realm
- 3 God questioned Elijah as to why he was running – God wanted to deal with the root of the problem
 - He couldn't hear anything. It's like Jack when he's barking uncontrollably he can't hear anything and you can't get his attention – this was to deal with Elijah's spiritual need
 - In between the two lines of questioning the Lord sent an earthquake, fire and wind to get his attention
 - The Lord showed him that Elijah needs to hear the voice of God
 - We have the Word that God speak to us to diagnose our spiritual condition
 - May the word stay central and vital and foremost in our lives
- 4 Elijah needed to hear the still voice of God – Elijah needed to get his walk with the Lord back on track
 - The Lord needed to get his attention and used the wind, earthquake and fire
 - The Lord speaks through his word
- 5 God gave Elijah something to do – restore him to his work
 - Sometimes prayer may not be the answer, listening to another sermon may not be the answer – doing something to serve someone else is the answer
 - It's in serving someone else that we take our eyes off of self and place them on someone else's struggle
 - Many times a way to pull ourselves out of a rut is to serve someone else