

# Elijah: How to Get Out of Your Cave

I bet all of us have experienced that at some point in time.

I certainly have, and all of us have encountered the despair that can sometimes come in this world and in this life.

In fact, some of you may be in a down season right now.

What do you do when you're in a down season?

What do you do when you're discouraged or in despair?

William Ward described discouragement this way.

He said, discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past.

It's distaste for the present, and it's distrust for the future.

It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday.

It is indifference to the opportunities of today, and it is insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow.

It's unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of fellow man, and unbelief in the promises of old.

It is impatience with time, immaturity of thought, and

And it is impoliteness to God.

I don't think I've ever met someone that said that they'd never battled discouragement or despair at some point in time.

It may be because of circumstances.

It may be because of some vocational issue.

It might be some personal loss.

It might be something relational.

But life is full of those occasions for discouragement.

C.S.

Lewis wrote, he said, God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could not learn any other way.

The real issue is not are you ever going to face discouragement or are you ever going to have a season of despair or maybe even depression.

The issue is how do you respond when it comes your way?

And in my message today, I want to look at a man who

Well, I think you would have considered if we had to put together a list of the top ten least likely people to get discouraged, you would have probably put this man in your list.

And his name is Elijah.

But when we read the passage that we'll read in just a moment, we find him sitting in a cave in utter despair and ready to throw in the towel.

Maybe that's where you are.

Maybe that's where you've been.

At some point in time, you might be.

And so God's Word has some help to us.

**If you're physically able to do so, why don't you stand with me as we read our passage this morning.**

And if you're watching by live stream or television, why don't you put that Krispy Kreme donut down and take your copy of God's Word and stand and join with us as we honor the reading of Scripture.

In verse 9, we break into the narrative.

It says,

There he came to a cave.

This is Elijah, and I'll come and fill in the back story.

He came to a cave, and he lodged in it.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah?

And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword.

And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

And he said, go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.

And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

But the Lord was not in the wind.

And after the wind, an earthquake.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake, a fire.

But the Lord was not in the fire.

And after the fire, the sound of a low whisper."

And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and he went out and he stood at the entrance of the cave.

And behold, there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

And he said, I've been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with a sword.

And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

And the Lord said to him,

Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive, you shall appoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

Now, Father, we ask you to take your word this morning, and would you enlighten our hearts?

Would you use it to encourage the discouraged?

Would you use it to uplift the downcast?

Father, would you teach us from the lessons of this, your great servant Elijah?

Father, speak to us, transform us, convict us, change us.

And Father, help us with Your Word.

We pray, we're listening, and we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Thank you.

You can be seated.

Now, my guess is many of you may be familiar with this story.

Elijah had just completed an incredible display of God's power

over the prophets of Baal and the wicked queen Jezebel and her husband, the king Ahab.

The narrative is told through chapters 18 and 19, and it's one of those stories that's worth reading and knowing all about.

And it appeared that all of Israel had been confused, which led to this confrontation.

Elijah had challenged the prophets of Baal to bring their best sacrifices and offer them to the Baals and ask that the false gods come down and descend upon their sacrifices.

And the story says that they set up their altar, they put their sacrifice on it, and nothing happened.

They cut themselves and they danced around it and they begged God

for Baal to come and take their sacrifice, but he wouldn't do it.

Then Elijah said, okay, it's my turn.

And he took and put on the altar the sacrifice to God, and he built a trench around it.

He poured three huge jugs of water over the sacrifice, so much so that it filled the trench.

around the altar, and then he called on God, and fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice that Elijah offered up.

And then, Elijah, the people said, all right, Elijah's God is God, the God of Israel.

They had been wavering in that.

In fact, Elijah had even confronted them and his own people and said, how long will you halt between two opinions?

Or how long will you limp along where you can't make your mind up between what is right and what is wrong?

But after this display, they all said, this is God.

Elijah's God is the true God.

And then they took these 450 prophets and they executed them.

And following that,

Elijah prayed for rain.

You see, Elijah had prayed that it not rain three years earlier just to show Jezebel and Ahab who was really God and who was in control.

They still defied, and they still led Israel astray.

And so finally, though, after all of this confrontation, Elijah prays, and a cloud begins to form in the distance.

He brings back rain.

These marvelous, miraculous deeds are

that had been wrought through Elijah before the people and the power of God.

And yet we find next that Elijah takes off running.

Jezebel, by the way, have you noticed we don't name our daughters Jezebel?

Have you noticed that?

There are two names we just don't use anymore, Jezebel and Judas.

You don't hear those names.

Oh, little Judas, he's going to grow up and disappoint us terribly, you know.

Jezebel, oh, she was a one mean little girl, you know.

We don't do that, do we?

But Jezebel threatens Elijah and says, I'm going to do to you what you did to the wicked prophets of Baal.

I'm about this time tomorrow.

And it scares him.

And he suddenly, it says he became afraid and he took off running and running, trying to hopefully distance himself.

He had a servant with him and he ran and ran and he ran himself to exhaustion.

Now, before I show you how to get out of the cave, because that's where he ended up in a cave, first a broom tree set down under, and then from there a cave, before I tell you how to get out of your cave, let me make a couple of what I believe are important observations about discouragement.

Discouragement often comes on the backside of some victory in your life.

It's interesting.

I've watched it through the years.

I've watched it in ministry, and I've watched it in people's lives, and oftentimes discouragement or despair, even depression will happen on the backside of something very good or something that's been very successful or some victory.

Elijah had just called down, think about it, fire from heaven.

ELIJAH HAD JUST SAID, GOD, LET IT RAIN AGAIN.

AND BOTH OF THESE THINGS HAPPENED.

HE HAD ELIMINATED ALL OF THE WICKED, PROPHETIC LEADERS OF THAT DAY.

AND GOD HAD HEARD HIM AND ANSWERED THAT.

ALL OF THIS HAD HAPPENED.

AND THEN SUDDENLY WE SEE HIM FLEEING FOR HIS LIFE, RUNNING IN FEAR AND TERROR OF QUEEN JEZEBEL.

DISCOURAGEMENT OFTEN COMES ON THE BACK SIDE OF SOME VICTORY.

THE SECOND THING I WOULD TELL YOU IS DISCOURAGEMENT MAKES US VULNERABLE TO LIES.

Discouragement will cause you to misperceive what's really going on.

Elijah believed the lies and the threats of Jezebel, which is kind of odd, isn't it?

That he had really, this showdown had really shown him, again, reminded him of who God was and shown the whole nation of Israel who was really God.

And yet we find that he is believing what Jezebel is saying.

I'm going to come and kill you.

I'm going to come get you.

I don't know, maybe you've been where Elijah was or maybe you're there now.

But when we find ourselves sitting under the broom tree or we find ourselves in a cave of despair and discouragement, what do we do?

Well, this morning what I want to do is I want to give you three things that I think you need based on our story here that will help you come out of your cave.

**The first thing I want you to see is that if you're in a cave of despair or discouragement, you need physical replenishment.**

We see that evidenced in verses 5, 7, and 8.

We didn't read those, but keep your Bibles open because I'm going to refer to some other Scriptures as well.

Look at verse 5.

So he's run this distance, this great distance, and he sits down under this broom tree, and an angel of the Lord touches him and says, "'Arise and eat.'

And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baked on a hot stone and a jar of water right there in front of him.

He ate and drank and lay down,' the Scripture says."

And then in short order, guess what happened again?

The angel touches him and says, Arise and eat, for the journey is too great.

You see, the angel knew that there was more travel involved than what Elijah knew, and he needed to eat and he needed to drink.

When you and I are in that place of despair, it's important that we understand the physical demands that need to be taken care of.

Elijah was exhausted.

In spite of what God had done, he had allowed fear to take over and he ran.

Scholars estimate that he ran that first leg was over 90 miles to the south.

And then after that, it says he left his servant there and he went on another journey of about 15 more miles.

In just a space of about 24 hours, he had traveled over 100 miles.

Now, he was exhausted physically.

Listen to me.

There's nothing godly about fatigue.

I can't find anywhere in the Scripture where God blesses a person because they're exhausted.

He will care for them, but you don't find Him urging His children to wear themselves out or run themselves to exhaustion.

So when you're in a cave, don't underestimate your need for a couple of practical things that we see.

Write these down, if you will.

One is physical rest.

When you're in a cave, when you're discouraged, when you're depressed, when you're in despair, don't underestimate your need for physical rest.

The prophet slept twice at least we see that he was instructed to sleep.

You need physical rest.

In the 24-Hour Society, Martin Moretti says that our most notorious industrial accidents in modern history are

like the Exxon Valdez disaster, the Three Mile Island disaster, the Chernobyl meltdown, the navigational issue with Korean airline 007.

All of these occurred in the middle of the night.

when most people are resting.

He goes on to say when the USS Vincennes shot down the Iranian A300 Airbus that killed 290 people aboard, he said it was at the hands of fatigue-stressed operators in a high-tech combat information center.

and they misinterpreted the radar data.

They repeatedly told the captain that this was an attack and that the plane was descending in an attack path when in reality it was on a normal flight path.

In the Challenger, the space shuttle Challenger explosion, key NASA officials made that ill-fated decision to go ahead with the launch after working for 24 straight hours and getting only two or three hours of sleep.

Their error in judgment cost the lives of seven astronauts, and it almost wiped out the U.S.

space program.

You see the point what he is making in that part of his book is that when we ignore our need for rest, there's not much good that happens.

Eventually it catches up with us.

It caught up with Elijah, this great, arguably one of the greatest figures in all of biblical and Christian history.

but it caught up with him, the exhaustion of serving and serving without rest.

The Bible teaches that there's a time to come away.

In fact, think about this.

God rested on the seventh day, and then Jesus and his disciples would retreat.

They would get away.

Why?

For rest.

If Jesus and the disciples needed it, how much more so do you and I?

Rest is essential for fruitful and faithful service.

And notice that it wasn't until Elijah ran himself to exhaustion that he lost the will to live and serve God.

Did you know when he got under that broom tree, do you know what he said to God?

He said, God, I'm the only one left.

Kill me.

Take my life.

He said, I don't even want to go on living.

And interestingly, he had told God, he said, but they're trying to kill me.

But he said, God, you just go ahead and take me.

He said, I don't even have the will to live.

Why?

It was at the end of this exhaustion that he said, I'm just throwing in the towel.

A few years ago, I read this story.

I may have told you this story sometime in the past.

But there was a woman in Germany, Maria Brunner.

And her husband was unemployed.

And she lived with a bunch of demanding children.

And so she had to support these children and her husband by cleaning other people's homes.

And even without a job, her husband had managed to run up quite a number of unpaid parking tickets, the total of which was over \$5,000.

And he kept the tickets secret from his wife.

She didn't know it.

But as the owner of the vehicle, according to their laws, she was responsible for the tickets.

And she could either pay the fine or she could go to jail.

and her husband couldn't come up with the money.

And so in a short while, the authorities came and they arrested her.

They told her if she couldn't pay that she'd have to go to jail.

Her reaction was this, and I quote, "'I've had enough of scraping by a living for this family.

As long as I can get food and a hot shower every day, I don't mind being sent to jail.'"

There I can finally get some rest and relaxation.

The police reported that when they went to arrest Maria, she seemed really happy to see us and repeatedly thanked us for arresting her.

While most people taken into custody, they said, hide their heads in shame, Maria smiled and waved as she was driven off to jail.

Thank you.

Sweet relief.

Listen, I guess that's one way to get rest.

But God has a better way.

God has set aside a day for rest and a day to restore us.

It's called Sunday.

It's intended to give you rest and to give you restoration.

Charles Spurgeon said this.

He said, the bow is

cannot be always bent without eventual fear of breaking.

Rest time is not waste time.

It's the economy of our time.

Together, fresh strength.

He adds, it is wisdom to take an occasional furlough.

In the long run, he said, we shall do more by sometimes doing less.

So, we need that rest.

Let me give you some helps in finding rest.

First of all, realize that rest is more than sleep.

Don't confuse rest with taking a vacation.

We've just come through spring break.

Don't confuse rest with spring break.

You know what I mean?

When you've taken those trips, vacation time, I need a break kind of time, and when you finish, you need a break from your break.

Don't confuse...

Don't confuse rest with vacations.

Relax your mind.

Stop trying to solve everything.

Quit being the manager of the universe.

Stop trying to resolve everything.

Give your brains a break.

And then I would tell you, release your burdens.

You see, when you carry around burdens that God never intended for you to carry around, it's going to wear you out.

In fact, the Scripture says in Psalm 62, 5, For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is in Him.

Quit trying to carry all those burdens that God doesn't intend for you to carry around.

They will absolutely wear you out.

And then recline on God.

Do you know that's what trust is?

It's just reclining on God.

Trust God to give you rest.

Peter put it this way.

He said, casting all of your anxieties on him.

Why?

Because he cares for you, right?

And so you need physical rest.

I mean, this is just real practical, but God knew that Elijah needed physical rest.

He tells him, sleep, twice, sleep.

But there's something else you need, not just physical rest.

You need nutritional refueling.

He also told him to eat, didn't he?

He said, eat, and God even made something for him to eat there and put it there for him.

Why is eating right an important part of the process of getting out of a cave of despair?

Well, think about it.

How many times have you heard a person who was discouraged or in despair or depression say something like this, I just don't feel like eating?

They should, they need to, but they just say, I don't feel like it.

Or they say something like, I just don't have much of an appetite.

We need to eat right when we are discouraged or depressed.

Now, don't confuse eating with the other side, which is eating to pacify your discouragement.

You know, if you're battling discouragement and despair, chocolate bar therapy isn't the answer.

All right, you understand what I'm saying?

We need to eat well, we need to eat right, but we need to not eat to pacify what we may be experiencing.

Refueling your physical body is important, you see, because it assists with the well-being of your emotions.

God prescribed rest, and God prescribed renourishment.

Why?

Because he knew that Elijah needed that rest.

Rest and nourishment if he was going to get away from where he was and get back to where he should be.

And there was more to go.

There was more ahead.

And so God understood what was necessary just practically.

Isn't that the incredible thing about God?

He knows practically what you need.

He designed you.

And He knows what helps you physically as well as spiritually.

So you need to address the physical side of your despair.

Now let me just say something to you right here.

If you battle depression or discouragement, one of the things I always do when I counsel people is say, have you been to your doctor?

Sometimes it is physiological, okay?

And so you need to understand that sometimes it is spiritual, okay?

In my case, most of the time when I have battled discouragement or despair or even depression, it has been a spiritual attack, and I know that.

I know what to do about it, but it doesn't make it not real.

Sometimes it is demonic.

Sometimes it's a combination of all, all right?

So understand that, that it comes in different kinds of forms, but understand that these things help whatever the source may be.

**The second thing I would show you this morning is not only do you need physical help, physical replenishment, you also need spiritual enlightenment.**

In verses 11 and following, we see that displayed there.

It says, and behold, there came a voice.

So he goes to the cave and he hears this voice and he went out and he stood in the entrance and this voice came and said, Elijah, what are you doing here?

The first thing that God did was to fill Elijah's physical tank.

Why?

So that he could fill Elijah's spiritual tank.

These tanks all work together.

You have, I've talked to our staff about it before, maybe even talked here over the years about these three tanks that we all have, physical, spiritual, emotional, mental tanks, and the balance level in those affects the others.

And God knew that Elijah needed his physical tank filled up so that he could then fill the spiritual tank up.

When you're in a cave, you need to hear the voice of God.

What does God have to say?

And you need to be alone with Him to do that.

Elijah, think about it, had run at this point over 100 miles.

But then notice that after God filled him,

It says that God sent him on another journey, a 40-day and 40-night journey.

Now, the journey to Mount Horeb where he sent him was not geographically a 40-day trip.

It wouldn't take 40 days to get there.

The 40 days were about Elijah being alone with God for 40 days.

It wasn't about the length of the journey.

Does that make sense?

It was about 40 days that he needed to get him alone where he could give him his new assignment and his new mission.

Now don't miss this.

The first journey was a journey of fear and

He ran based on his fear that led to his exhaustion and subsequently his discouragement and his depression, if you will.

The first journey was a journey of fear.

But this second journey, the 40 days and 40 nights, was a journey about faith.

This was about spiritual development.

The 40 days were about his spiritual enlightenment, and they involved three things.

Write these down.

They involved spiritual conversation.

Elijah would pour his heart out to God.

Did you notice that God says, now, Elijah, what are you doing here?

And he says, well, you know, Lord, he said, I've been so faithful.

I have, you know, stood for you, and I have dealt with the wicked prophets, and I've done all of these things for you, and yet your people, the people, they have rebelled against you.

And I, only I, am left to serve you.

Now, look, Elijah's having one big pity party.

And we all see that, and we can identify with that.

Hello?

Have you ever had that?

Hey, y'all stop looking so spiritual.

Have you ever had that?

Where you just kind of sat down, and you're despair, and you're discouragement, and you just kind of poured out all your pity to the Lord.

Lord, you know how much I love you.

They don't love you like I love you.

I love you so much, and yet this is where it is.

Lord, I don't even want to go on.

That's what he said.

And God is a good God because God just listened to him, didn't he?

So God wants to get you alone, and sometimes that means getting you in a cave so he can have a conversation with you where you're not distracted by all the other voices around you.

And Elijah poured out his heart to God.

If you're in a cave, it's fine.

Look, pour out your heart to God.

Tell God.

It may be a lot of pity, but pour it out.

God's a good listener.

And be honest with God about your feelings and your perceptions.

God will have a conversation back with you, but listen to what he says.

And then the second thing that these 40 days were about, not just spiritual conversation, it's about spiritual restoration.

God heard his complaint, and then God told him the truth.

Look at verse 15, if you will.

And then the Lord said to him, go.

Return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

Go back to the road that you were on.

Get back on the road.

Get back on the path.

Restoration.

God heard his complaint, but he said, let me give you the truth.

And God sent him back into mission and ministry.

And then it was about spiritual reorganization.

Let me tell you something interesting.

It said, if you read on through the story and to the end of this particular segment, you find that God says to Elijah,

I want you to go back.

There's a man I want you to anoint as king, and there's some business that needs to be taken care of.

And then he says, and then you're going to find a guy that's going to become your helper.

I'm going to send you a helper.

We're going to change things up.

We're going to reorganize.

And God would bring Elisha to assist him.

In fact, the scripture even says that in the last part, verse 21 of this chapter.

Look at that.

That last statement says, and then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

That is, Elisha went after Elijah and became an assistant.

God reorganized.

He needed help.

He was trying to do it all by himself.

So God took Elijah on a journey of spiritual discovery.

He took him to a place where there were no distractions and no confusing voices.

And it is there that God deals with Elijah's sense of loneliness.

And he deals with his mistaken perception of his ministry.

And it's there that God says, Elijah, what are you doing here?

Now you say, now pastor, why would God ask Elijah a question like that?

Because it was God who had sent him there.

Do you understand?

Listen, the question is not about the physical place that Elijah is at.

God had sent him there.

The question, why are you, Elijah, why are you here, is about his spiritual place.

Why are you in this place spiritually, in your wilderness of despair and discouragement?

Listen, friend, I want to tell you, there's something positive about the caves here.

And that is, the positive is when it becomes a place where God can get your undivided attention so that He can do something.

He can restore you.

He can refresh you.

He can reorient your life and your mission and your purpose.

So I want to say this to you this morning.

If you're in a place of despair, above all else, let it cause you to seek the Lord.

We can say about Elijah that when he got to those places, he sat down and what did he do?

He started praying, didn't he?

Oh Lord, I've been zealous.

I've been for you and with you and all of this stuff.

He did sit down and begin to pray.

Let your place of despair cause you to seek the Lord.

The psalmist in Psalm 55, 22 said, cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you.

He will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Seek the Lord if you're in a cave, if you're in that place of despair.

So,

When you're in the cave of discouragement, you need physical replenishment.

You need time with God.

You need spiritual enlightenment.

## **And last, you need practical encouragement.**

You need some practical encouragement.

And that's where verses 15, 18, 19 come in.

As I just referred to, look at verse 18, I guess it is.

So God sends him back on the path.

He says, get back.

Now you've rested.

You've eaten.

You've heard from me.

Here's your new assignment.

Go back.

There's a king.

There's work to be done.

Get back on the road you were on doing what you were doing.

I'm going to send you to a place.

And then he says, oh, by the way, let me just encourage you with some news.

You said you were the only one.

Well, he said, I will leave 7,000 in Israel of whom all of their knees have not bowed to the bells and every mouth has not kissed him.

You know what God said to you?

Let me encourage you with something.

You've been in despair.

Let me just, let me encourage you with something.

There are 7,000.

You're not the only one.

There are 7,000 others out there in this land that have not bent their knee to worship the bells.

Encouragement.

And so he sent him back to his work and to his mission and

And part of God's prescription for his discouragement and despair was to, after he had rested, after he had eaten, after he had heard from God, was to get back up and get back in the fight.

God's Word is the necessary source of encouragement for your life in the cave, to get out of the cave.

And so that means this, you're going to have to hear what God has to say and then do not let your feelings control your direction.

Get back to work.

Do what you know to do.

Do not let your feelings dictate how you respond.

You say, well, pastor, you know, when you're despair, that's all about feelings.

I know.

But I also know that's when your faith and discipline have to challenge how you feel.

Feelings are wonderful.

I'm all for feelings.

I've told you this for you.

I'm all for feelings.

I love feelings.

Life would be miserable without feelings.

But I want to tell you something.

They're wonderful, but they're not reliable.

Because your feelings do this, right?

They can change three or four times during a day based on whatever circumstances you encounter.

Feelings are good, but they're not reliable.

Don't build your life on the ups and downs of your feelings.

And so don't let your feelings control your direction.

What if Elijah had to turn back after he'd heard from God now and said, okay, I get it, but I don't feel like doing it.

Now we can identify with that, right?

Because that's where I know, I know what the right thing to do is, I just don't feel like doing it.

Or I know what the right thing to do is, I'm just not going to do it.

Listen, the cure for the cave is to say, I will do what I know is right to do, not because I feel like it, but because it's the right thing to do.

And God has made that known.

Feelings are wonderful.

Let's have them.

But let's not allow them to control our direction when we're in a cave.

And then secondly, don't be deceived by lies that misrepresent the truth.

He said, I'm the only one left.

It was a lie.

You and I, here's what we have to, we have to filter our thoughts and our feelings through God's Word.

What does God say?

Not what do I think or not what I perceive.

The devil's a master of lying.

He'll lie to you.

He is the father of lies.

The Bible says he's the author of confusion.

And so what he wants you to do is believe lies.

He wants to have lies replace truth.

And if the lies replace truth, when you're in a cave, guess what you'll do?

You'll stay in the cave.

You'll stay in the cave.

Don't be deceived by lies that misrepresent the truth.

One of my favorite books, I've given it out even some, a couple times in the last week.

I keep a supply of them.

But every Christian ought to read this book.

It's called Telling Yourself the Truth by William Bacchus.

He's a Christian.

He's a believer, psychiatrist.

It's a fabulous book.

Every Christian, you say, well, I don't battle with any of that.

You need to read this.

Every Christian needs to believe it because what he deals with is the perceptions and the lies that shape our life and

Based on what we believe that the devil tells us.

Well, listen, don't be deceived by lies that misrepresent the truth.

Do what God says, period.

Not what I feel like doing.

And then you filter everything through His Word.

But you've got to know what He says to filter it.

So how do you do that?

Well, you read it.

You've got to read it.

Look, increase your intake of God's Word.

A frightening, I mentioned this I think on a Wednesday night recently, but a frightening study revealed this past year that the illiteracy among Christians is at an all-time low.

And that many Christians, including many pastors, but many Christians rarely open their Bible except to come to church.

And that many pastors rarely crack their Bibles open unless it's to get a sermon.

God help us.

Listen, increase your intake in the Word of God.

Read it.

Memorize it.

Believe it.

Listen to it.

Obey it.

Take it personally.

Claim it so that you'll not be deceived by the lies that misrepresent the truth.

And then do not miss...

God's designed relationships that he provides for you.

Verse 19, again, calls attention.

So it says Elijah departed from there and he found Elisha.

Now I'm going to preach on Elisha in this series too because he's got some lessons for us to learn.

But remember that Elijah felt alone.

But he found Elisha.

Now, when you're in a cave, find the relationships, the godly kinds of relationships that will encourage and inspire your faith.

It says that Elijah assisted him in verse 21.

Do you know what that word in the Hebrew means?

It means that he ministered to him.

Look, he was a help in terms of the ministry, but God brought, I believe, Elisha alongside for Elisha's sake for the ministry that he would have later, but he also brought him alongside Elijah for Elijah's sake because Elijah needed help, certainly in the work of God, but Elijah needed a friend.

He was carrying the load.

He was carrying the work.

He needed a friend.

Relationships are a necessary part of dealing with depression and discouragement and despair.

God hasn't designed us to operate alone.

Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto.

I mean, and Batman had Robin.

One of the common things, one of the worst things that people do when they're discouraged or in despair is they isolate themselves from other people.

But friend, when depression or discouragement comes, we need relational encouragement to focus on others rather than just ourselves.

In fact, it's one of the reasons that God established the church.

We're just better together, aren't we?

We are.

We're just better together.

And that's why when you come to church, you may come grumpy and irritable.

But when you come to church and you begin to sing and praise God, and then you listen to the Scripture, and then you sit with friends, or you go to a small group with friends, and you're encouraged and you're uplifted, and you leave this place thinking this, I sure am glad I went to church.

I didn't feel like going.

I heard about a man who told his wife, he said, I'm not going to church today.

She said, yes, we're going to church.

He said, no, I'm not.

She said, why all of a sudden are you not going?

He said, number one, I don't like the pastor.

He said, he preaches long and he says, I just don't care for it.

She said, well, we can live with that though.

He said, yeah, but he said, the people, they're just not very nice.

They're not nice to me.

And he said, and I just, he said, I'm not going.

She said, get up, get your clothes on.

You're going, you're the pastor.

Listen, one of the reasons that God had put the church together is because we're better together than we are apart.

And listen, that's why when you say, well, I don't feel like going, but you go, you leave and say, I'm glad I didn't trust my feelings that I went.

Listen, if you are despairing and discouraged this morning, learn from Elijah.

You need physical replenishment for your body.

You need spiritual enlightenment for your soul.

And you need just practical encouragement for your walk of faith to move out of the cave.

And having the right perspective on all of that helps us go forward back to where we need to be.

Robert Morgan, you know Robert Morgan.

We've had Robert Morgan here a few times over the years.

And he tells this humorous illustration about never despairing.

You know, Paul told us not to despair.

He said, no matter what the circumstance, we don't despair.

We don't lose heart.

Robert Morgan told a story about a man.

There was this particular man who walked to work every morning.

He was a businessman.

And every day his route took him through a particular park in the city.

And every day he saw an old fellow sitting on a park bench.

The fellow was an illegal bookie.

But he didn't know that, and he walked past him every morning.

And the old fellow always looked kind of forlorn, he said.

And the businessman thought he was homeless.

And so one day en route to work, the businessman decided he had this surge of compassion, and he wanted to do something good for this fellow, this homeless man that he passed by.

And so he handed him an envelope containing \$10 and a note saying, Never Despair.

Well, the next day, the next morning as he passed by the old man, the old man reached out and handed the businessman an envelope of which he opened.

It contained \$60.

He looked at the old man.

The old codger explained, never despair was in the money paying six to one in the second race yesterday.

Listen.

We always win when we make up our minds to never despair.

And it is a message that you and I still need in life and in our labors for the Lord.

So Paul said, we do not despair.

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

As we look not to the things that are seen, you know, the things that discourage you, but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are passing away, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

So we do not despair.

And we do not lose heart.

Father, thank you.

Thank you for the prescription of your word.

Thank you, Lord, that we don't have to live in despair or discouragement.

Thank you for the lessons.

And Lord, thank you for Elijah teaching us something that he probably never intended to teach us.

But through his experience, we learn.

And through his experience, may we grow.

And Father, I pray for all of those under the sound of my voice, whether it's radio or television or live stream right here in this auditorium that may be battling with discouragement or despair.

Would you come alongside them just like you did with Elijah and let them know that they're not alone but that you have a new road for them.

Let them take the steps that they need to take so that they can journey on with you and for you.

And then, Lord, for those who may be listening today and have no relationship with you, I pray that this would be that day where they called upon you.

They're lonely, and they don't understand that nobody can fill their life like you can.

I pray that this morning they'll call on you, that in their hearts right now they'll say, Lord Jesus, I can't do this on my own.

Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for being a friend who died on the cross for my sins.

I know that I am a sinner, and I need you, and I ask you to come into my life.

Forgive me and be my Savior.

Thank you that you will be a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Father, for others that are battling this season in their life, I pray that they'll just feel your proximity, just like the gentle wind that blew across Elijah's face that caused him to realize that you weren't in all the dramatic stuff.

You were just quietly there beside him with a word for him.

I pray that they will understand and receive that from you today.

Speak now, Father, before we're gone in these moments of invitation.

For we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

I'm so glad that you've tuned in to the broadcast today.

I hope you've been encouraged by God's Word.

It sure has been a joy to share it with you.

And even now, people here at Ridgecrest are making decisions for Christ.

Perhaps as you've watched or listened to this broadcast, you've recognized your own need for a personal relationship with Christ.

Perhaps the prompting of the Spirit has caused you to recognize that you need Jesus as your Savior.

And the good news is you can receive Him right now and right where you are.

You see, the Bible says, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

So right where you are, you can call on him.

Say something like this from your heart to him.

Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me.

I know that I'm a sinner, and I know that you came into this world and died on the cross for my sins.

And so right now, I invite you to come into my life, forgive me, and be my Savior.

I can assure you that if you'll call on him, based on what God has already told us in the Bible, he'll hear that prayer and he'll answer it.

You see, he wants to begin this new journey in your life with you by transforming you into his image.

And we'd love to help you with that decision as well.

So on your screen, you'll see a QR code and some contact information.

If you would, take a moment and scan that QR code or reach out to us at the email address on your screen.

We would love to hear about your decision today.

And we'd love to help you take your next steps.

There are no strings attached and there are no fees involved.

We'd just like to help you begin this new journey with Christ.

Now, you may be watching this broadcast today and say, what I need is a church family to belong to.

I already know Christ as my Savior.

I'd just like to become a part of the Ridgecrest family.

Well, if that's the case for you, scanning our QR code will take you to a location where you can provide us with information that will enable us to assist you with your decision, whether that be becoming a member here, being scripturally baptized, or some other kind of decision.

Well, again, it's been a joy to have you with us today, and I hope you've been encouraged by God's Word.

And whatever decision we can help you with, by all means, contact us.

Until next time, may the Lord bless you.