

Out of the Cave

Out of the Cave – Part 2

Out of the Cave

Based on the life of the Prophet Elijah

Went from 2 great victories and 3 verses later – wanted to die

Ended up in a Cave

Cave – perfect metaphor for the way depression feels

Dark – disorienting

You know there's a way out – just not sure where it is

And there's bats – seriously – mind begins to fear things

I think everyone has experienced depression at one level or another

I've been very open about my own journeys

1999 – my depression that led to me moving to Birmingham

Stepping into the Light

Last week – how we get in the cave of depression

Today – Stepping into the Light

Pick up the story where we left off

(1 Kings 19:5-8 NIV) Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 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." 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.

1. Step into a needed recovery.

"Strengthened by that food"

The physical thing is the first thing God did for Elijah

He ate – drank – slept

He was strengthened by the food

If depressed – 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

Exercise and sunlight

So what do we do?

We have to take control of our schedules

If I don't prioritize my life, someone else will.

(Psalm 90:12 LB) Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.

And then look at what happened...

(1 Kings 19:9-12 NIV) 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?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn 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." 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. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

He went to Mount Horeb – another name for Mount Sinai

Where God reveals Himself to people

2. Step into a God encounter.

Earth, wind, fire, still small voice

God said – Elijah, I've got something for you to see

Elijah stood there and God put on a fireworks show

First he did a wind, then he did an earthquake, then he did a fire

It was showing God's tremendous power as a reminder to Elijah

But God's presence came in a still small voice

We look for the dynamic, but God is in the intimate.

There is no substitute to power and presence of God
This is the greatest anti-depressant there is
A fresh awareness of God's presence in your life

We want God to do the spectacular every time
But sometimes He would rather whisper to us

On Mount Carmel, God showed up for everyone else
On Mount Horeb, God showed up for Elijah
At Mount Carmel, God was spectacular to everyone
At Mount Horeb, God was special to Elijah

We have to cultivate the presence of God
I teach you how in the book

Create environments where we can get close to God
Quiet our souls – make room for God
(Psalm 46:10 NIV) Be still, and know that I am God.

Asaph depressed about the wicked – the world...

(Psalm 73:16-17 NIV) When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God.

Watch what happens next...

(1 Kings 19:13-14 NIV) 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?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn 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."

Notice that Elijah wasn't out of the cave – but at the mouth of the cave
There are more steps to take

Pulled his cloak over his face – face represents your identity
Your face is what you look like
And again – he gives the same complaint

That wasn't true by the way

He had a flawed understanding of himself and reality
And that's why we need to...

3. Step into a true identity.

We live in a generation of narcissism and poor self esteem
Amplifies the mental triggers 100 times
It's a recipe for a complete mental health meltdown

Online/Social media
Research shows these have changed the brain formation of youth
And now a generation of adults

An incorrect identity does the same thing to us that it did to Elijah
Makes us believe a narrative that is not true

Story – I've felt it as well – easy to get caught up in it
Let me give the Pastor Chris version of that verse...

(1 Kings 19:14 PCT) "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. I been preaching three services every weekend for twenty years. The government and Dr. Fauci won't let me fill up our auditoriums and culture is going to hell. I am the only one left, and Instagram's trying to kill me too."

Know who you are – security is key

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

~Eleanor Roosevelt

But watch how God responds
He doesn't even address Elijah's complaints about earth

(1 Kings 19:15-18 NIV) The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven

thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Here's the fourth step...

4. Step into a new assignment.

If I could only give you one solution – this one
The power of a project – dream – vision
That's why the Word says...

(Proverbs 29:18 KJV) Where there is no vision, the people perish.

It's what Viktor Frankl discovered with his logotherapy

People have enough to live by but nothing to live for; they have the means but no meaning.

~Viktor Frankl

Notice that God didn't ever address those issues
He reminded Elijah about his calling
“Go back the way you came” – Beersheba
And then gave him people to anoint and influence

By the way – that place he would go back to was Beersheba
The place of the oath
The place where he needed to renew his commitment to serve God

The place where you got fired up
Was willing to give everything – do anything
Purely focused on the eternal rewards

A focused heart on a clear assignment helps the pain...

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18) Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

The quickest way to defeat depression
Start looking at the needs of other people

Get a ministry where you are giving out and God is giving to you.

And here's the last step...

(1 Kings 19:19 NIV) So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.

5. Step into a relational strength.

Elijah never walked alone again

And we never hear of him being depressed again

We talk about this so much at Highlands

The necessity of the right relationships

Look carefully at the closest associations in your life, for that is the direction you are headed.

~Kevin Eikenberry

Leadership coach and author

That's why we're a church of groups