

**BAGGAGE**  
**Bags of Depression**  
Part 6

We're talking about one of the heaviest bags out of all of them and that is the *Bag of Depression*.

A lot of people face it at one time or another.

It's a billion dollar business, before the little pills that gave you that little boost during the day before psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists, and counselors, God knew how to deal with depression.

And the same Jesus that will heal your physical body, will give us victory over depression.

And a lot of us face it in many different kinds, types, ways ... it hits us in all kinds of different directions. I'm not going to share with you about what depression looks like, because if you're experiencing it you know what it looks like."

But what I want to share with you today is some valuable principles that I believe that as we go to God's Word, as God dealt with the man in the Bible and his depression, we're going to see that healing is going to come to you today.

I would venture to say you might be sitting here and you're going, "Hey, I'm good. I'm happy.

It's cold outside. And I'm still happy today." Well that's a good thing!

But how many of us know a family member, a friend, a loved one, an acquaintance, somebody we work with, that battles and struggles with depression.

Turn your Bibles with me to 1st Kings, Chapter 19. And while you're turning there, let me give you a little history. There's a big drought in the land. The King Ahab has abandoned the ways of Almighty God, and he's turned to the gods of Baal. Elijah comes on the scene, the Prophet of God... it's a showdown at the OK Corral. And the 450 prophets of Baal ... he said, "You get your bull. You prepare your sacrifice. And you call on your god to consume the sacrifice." And so he taunts him and says, "Shout a little louder! Maybe your gods are hard of hearing!" And basically nothing happens. Then Elijah turns and he takes his altar that he's built, and his sacrifice, he has them pour water all over it, builds a trough around, fills it up with water, he calls on the power of God, and the fire of God comes down, laps it up, consumes it all, burns up the dirt and the rocks and the stones, the water that was all around and the people are like, "That's the God." And then Elijah says, "Sig 'em." And they go and they destroy and kill the 450 prophets of Baal. Well Jezebel is ticked off. She's been trying to kill the prophets of God. And she put a hit ... basically a modern-day hit, out on Elijah and she wants him taken out.

We're going to pick up in 1 Kings 19:1-5

Sometimes think that depression is associated with the loss of ... the death of a loved one, or the loss of a job, or financial pain.

Depression hits us any way, shape, and form.

So let's look at what are some of the symptoms and then what are some of the things that God did.

The first symptom is, **Elijah is worn**. He is physically, mentally, emotionally drained.

He's done battle with 450 prophets.

He's outrun Ahab's chariot and beat him.

He's now traveled into the middle of the wilderness.

He is physically, mentally, emotionally wiped out.

And how many of you know that when you get in that place you don't look at things from a clear perspective.

And so look at God's answer. God's answer is in Verse 5. It says: *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 [he said, "I'm still depressed.]"* And he lays back down and goes to sleep. *Then 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. And look what it says. *He was strengthened by that food.*

Our first solution is this ... we need to **deal with the physical needs** of our body.

We need to give our body the fuel that it needs.

Our brain runs off of what we eat I need fruits. I need vegetables. I need healthy proteins.

And give my body the rest it needs.

I need to pull back and maybe lessen my schedule a little bit and give myself time and my body to recuperate and I'm amazed when you eat right, when you exercise, go take a walk, get some sunshine, get some of that Vitamin D flowin' in your body.

When you give your body what it needs, suddenly life isn't so bad.

But we've gotta feed our bodies and take care of it and equip it so it can do and fulfill as it's been called to do.

The second system is ... **Elijah's running from God. He's spiritually dry.**

He's not had time for his devotional time. He's not had time for his quiet time with the Lord.

And it's when we run from God that we get into the dry places and we end up in the wilderness and we say, "God, I don't understand."

God didn't do it ... we did! We ran. We got scared.

Elijah allowed fear to direct him versus the spirit of God.

Look what it says in Verse 3: *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. He went a day's journey into the wilderness.*

That's like parking the car and hiking for a day out in the middle of nowhere.

And you feel alone? No kidding!

So how did God respond?

The solution ... Verse 8: So he got up and ate and drank.

Strengthened by that food and God had told him ... he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. And there he went into the cave and spent the night.

Verse 11 says: *Then the Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."*

When we're feeling depressed, the solution we need to do after we've fed our bodies, is **we need to pursue God. We need to pursue His Word and we need to pursue his people.**

There are people that are not here today because they woke up, they looked outside, and they got depressed. I can guarantee you that when people don't show up two to three Sundays ... they're going through something.

They're a little ... the spirit of heaviness is on them.

Just wake up to the devil's tactics.

"Hey, you're going through a hard time. Avoid God's people. Avoid God. And avoid His Word."

Yeah, that'll make the situation better!

Because the enemy's goal is to what? Isolate us.

Who does the lioness take out? She takes out the stupid little gazelle that goes over here by itself.

She can't go after the herd. She goes after the one that's isolated.

So isolation is what causes you to go deeper into your depression.

If you're depressed today, you need to get your coat of praise on and get off your coats of depression.

Pursue God ... pursue His Word. It said Mount Horeb. Where did God say? "Come back to the mountain. Come back to that secret place."

Mount Horeb is where Moses met God in the fiery burning bush.

Mount Horeb is where God wrote in the tablets of stone and Moses took them back down the mountain.

Mount Horeb is where the children of Israel were in the desert and they're, "We're thirsty. We're hungry.

We're going to die. I need something to drink."

And God goes, "What do you do with these people?" And God says, "Strike the rock here at Mount Horeb." And rivers of water come forth.

That's the miracle place. Go back to God.

Duke University conducted a study of 4,000 older adults and one of the primary conclusions they came back with in their research is attendance at the House of Worship is related to lower rates of depression and anxiety.

You guys are better off than all those other stay-at-home people.

Because you came to church today!

Andrew Newburg, Director of the Clinical Nuclear Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh studied the brains of religious individuals who prayed

And he found that those who pray have been shown to lower the risk of depression, heart disease, and improve immune function.

**Hebrews 10** challenges us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together but we come to church to spur one another on.

Before you leave today, I want you to smile big. Shake a hand or hug about 5 to 10 people.

That person who just kinda looks at you like, "I dare you to hug me," they need like 10 hugs today.

There's a power in touch. There's a power that is released.

There's a transfer of my energy to you and when you hug somebody, when you touch somebody, when you allow them to come in, it's going to make a difference.

JC Penney ... the guy that founded the store ... the actual guy ... business is busting out and then in 1929 we had the Great Depression. And he had his finances extended in multiple directions and because of the pull, everyone's asking for his loans to be paid off. And he went into a grave and dark depression. He checked himself into the Kellogg Sanitarium. Kellogg ... like Frosted Flakes ... there in Battle Creek. It was much more ... it really was! It was a sanitarium and he checked himself in because of concern of how bad he was getting. Here's what he said. "I got weaker day by day. I was broken. Nervously and physically. I was filled with despair, unable to see even a ray of hope. I had nothing to live for. I felt that I hadn't a friend left in the world that even my family had turned against me. Alarmed by the rate of his deterioration, Dr. Eagleston gave Penney a sedative. However, that quickly wore off and Penney awakened with the conviction that he was living the last night of his life. He says, "Getting out of bed I wrote farewell letters to my wife, my son ... saying that I did not expect to live to see the dawn." Penney awakened the next morning surprised to find himself alive. Making his way down the hallway of the hospital, he could hear singing coming from the little chapel where devotional services were held each morning. Nurses and doctors and patients gathered. The words of the hymn he heard being sung spoke deeply to him. Going into the chapel he listened to the singing, the reading of the Scripture lesson, and the prayer. He says, "Suddenly, something happened. I can't explain it, I can only call it a miracle. I thought as if I had been instantly lifted out of the darkness of a dungeon into a warm brilliant sunlight. I felt as if I had been transported from hell to paradise. I felt the power of God as I never felt it before." JC Penney says from that day to this, "My life has been free from worry. The most dramatic and glorious 20 minutes of my life were those I spent in that chapel that morning."

When you're depressed, come hang with God's people. Come worship the Living God. Heaviness and depression will lift.

**Ps 42:3-5**

A young man comes ... a tale is told from ancient India that a young man comes to the old man, the sage, and he asks, "How can I find God?" The old man takes him and walks him down to the river and they begin walking on into the water and they get out to where it's ... the water's just below their chin. The old sage grabbed the young man by his neck, throws him underwater and holds him under water. The boy is thrashing and scratching and trying to get up. His lungs are starting to fill with water and the sage lifts him up and he's coughing and the young man says, "What has that got to do with seeking God and how should I seek God?" The sage walks him back to the shoreline and he says to the young man, "While you were under the water, what did you want more than anything else?" The young man thought for just a moment and replied, "I wanted air more than anything else." The old man replied, "When you want God as much as you wanted air, you'll find Him."

*Seek me and find me. And when you seek me with all your heart, God says, "I'll be there."*

Some of the times when we seek Him it's like, "Hey God, I need help! Oh, He's not there." Seek God with all of your heart. Pursue Him.

Third symptom is ... **Elijah had bottled frustrations and fear.** Fear was motivating his direction. He's frustrated. But look what it says in Verse 9 ... *There when he came into the cave and spent the time and the Word of the Lord came to him and the Word of the Lord said, "What are you doing here?"*

Notice the Lord didn't get on his case ... "You need to grow up! You need to deal with this! Where's your faith? What's going on?"

No, the Lord came and said, "What are you doing here?"

And see, one of the mistakes we make with our family members or friends, is we think that guilt and condemnation is going to pull them out of that depression.

They're dealing with a problem.

And when we see their problem, we look at their bag of depression and we go, "It's not that big. Get over it. Where's your faith?"

But the person that's dealing with it? It looks like this to them. [Showing large bag.]

And when you say, "It's not that big of a deal! It's not that big of a deal!" I go, "Yes, it is! It's huge!

Can't you see what I'm going through?"

"No, I really don't understand."

"This is consuming my life."

So what do we need to do? What's the solution to that bottled frustration and fear? The solution is **be open and honest with what you are going through**. Be open and honest about what you are going through. Begin to talk it out. Begin to release it. Elijah's frustration ... he said, "I've 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 a sword, and I'm the only one left! And now they're trying to kill me too!" [Laughter] He let it out. Do you see what God did? God said, "Get it out."

When you go to professional counseling ... here's what they do. They want to get you talking about it.

How are you feeling about that?

How did it make you feel when your wife said that?

Well how do you think ... what's the best way you should respond to that?

Well now that you're in this situation, what do you see that your options are?

See, you don't go to a counselor for them to go, "Here's what you need to do ...

You've gotta come to that decision and conclusion on your own or else you're doing what somebody else said and when it doesn't go right, you go, "Oh, you messed up!"

What they're steering you to do is to get you to talk about it because the more you talk about it, now you suddenly go, "Hey, it's not that big of a problem.

It's not that big of a deal. Wait a second! I see ... there is some light at the end of the tunnel!"

**Fourth symptom ... False information.** Elijah had lost his perspective on life.

Reality is what you're facing. It's what you see. Perception is reality.

What he perceived was reality to him and what God had to do was to correct his perception.

And God does that when He says ... when Elijah says, "I'm the only one left."

What does God say? "No, there are seven thousand that haven't bowed their knee or kissed the Gods of Ahab.

There are seven thousand that are still trekking. You're not the only one. What did Jesus say? The truth will set you free!

See I'm feeling isolated I'm the only one. There's nothing I can do. I'm the only one left.

**And the solution is to climb to a new vantage point.**

Where did God send him? He said, "Leave this wilderness place, go back to the Mountain of God, go back to the presence of God, get back to that high place."

You've heard it said, "Never make a decision in the valleys of life." Always wait to make a decision till you're back on top again.

**\*\*\*When the circumstances start to overwhelm you, it's a sign that you're letting go of Him.**

Never make a decision when you're in the valleys of life.

Just walk forth by faith. Put your trust in God.

And don't make those decisions because that's where we, many times, make a wrong decision.

"I'm going to quit. I'm going to leave. I'm going to give up on this marriage."

And then all of a sudden we're saying things and we're doing things because we're operating by our feelings and not operating by the wisdom of God.

**Fifth symptom ... feelings and emotions dominate and control our decisions.**

Feelings and emotions. "I feel like you don't love me. I feel like you don't know ... I'm not as valued at this place of employment.

I feel." Okay?

It is a false perception. And so the solution is follow wisdom and take steps of faith.

Elijah went into the wrong direction. He's running from God. He ends up in the wilderness.

We need to take steps of wisdom and take steps of faith.

The Bible says in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

What are the people that love you saying to you in this time of darkness?

You need to be willing to trust them and take that step of faith even though you can't feel it, or you can't see it, you need to operate by the wisdom of those around you.

When you are depressed, waiting until you 'feel' like doing what's right is a huge mistake.

You can't trust your feelings when you're depressed.

You've gotta trust the people around you.

You've gotta trust them that when it feels like you're in the blind cave and you can't see anything and you feel that person pulling your hand and saying, "Hey, this is the way out."

You need to trust them and follow them and know that they love you and they have your best interest at heart.

And then you've got to take those steps of faith. We walk by faith and not by sight.

We don't walk by our circumstances ... we walk according to what God's Word says.

God's Word declares you're going to get through this situation.

A story is told of Martin Luther, the 16th century reformist in the Kingdom of Heaven, that he was going through some ... situations had not gone the way he wanted and depression sets in on him. After three days, his wife brought to him mourning clothes. Not like morning ... get up in the morning ... but to mourn ... mourning clothes to put on. Martin Luther looked at her and said, "Who's dead? Who died?" She said, "God." He said ... he rebuked her and said, "What do you mean God is dead? God can't die." She said, "Well, the way you've been acting, I was sure he had!"

**If God's alive, Jesus is still on the throne ... you have an opportunity to get out of this and to overcome the situation.**

The last symptom ... and I think this last symptom and solution is probably one of the first things you need to do. **The last symptom is Elijah's life had become self-absorbed.**

It was all about him and what he's feeling and "God, I'm the only one. And you've abandoned me. And I don't feel like ... I mean I went to battle for You and I didn't see You step in. You didn't put a wall of angels around me or anything."

And he was just kinda unloading on God. Look what God says to him in Verse 15: The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came."

Sometimes when we get into the darkness, we need to follow the breadcrumbs back to where we last heard God speak.

Sometimes we need to back up because we've gone the wrong direction.

We've made a u-turn when God didn't want us to or didn't intend us to.

But look what it says ... *"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.*

**But here's the solution. Serve and help others.**

Get back on your horse and go back to work. Begin to serve other people.

Dr. Menninger said this ... he was asked at a mental health conference ... "What would you advise the person to do if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?" Everyone thought he was going to say, "You need to pursue psychiatric help." Here was his answer: He said, "Lock up your house. Go across the railroad tracks and find somebody in need and help that person."

**To overcome discouragement, don't focus on yourself.**

Get involved in the lives of other people. **True living is found in giving."**

Because when you begin to see someone who's in a worse off situation than you, then you realize, "My situation isn't really that bad."

If you're depressed, find a place to start giving and serving.

If you're depressed and you're a guy ... go find that neighbor that those three kids don't have a father and say to that woman ... but don't be weird about it ... but say to that woman, "I'd like to take your kids to give them a special afternoon and buy them pizza.

I'd love for you to come ... if you'll meet me there, I wanna pay for your kids to have an amazing afternoon."

Do something beyond yourself.

And when you live beyond yourself ... watch this ... you start living as Christ lived.

And when you live and give, it's going to come back to you.

And when you plant and you invest in other people, it's going to come back to you.

I close with this ... Isaiah 61: *The spirit of the Lord of God is upon me.*

These are the words of Jesus that he quoted in the New Testament.

*Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.*

*Why did Jesus come? He came, He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; To console those who mourn in Zion and to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*