

- Despair is having no hope, depression is when we only see what is wrong
- Elijah had periods of despair and depression

We have all experienced living with despair and depression at times during our life. However, we may not use the word "despair" to describe how we feel. Being in despair is the exact opposite from living with hope. The KJV dictionary defines despair as being hopeless, even a loss of hope in the mercy of God and in life. Paul uses the word despair in 2Corinthians 4:8: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair." Paul was saying that in spite of all the troubles he encountered everywhere he went he did not give up hope. We should never give up hope either no matter what our circumstance. Being in despair and being depressed are closely related. We can be mildly depressed where we still have hope but we're just worn out and can only see what is wrong. Or we can be severely depressed where we no longer have hope and everything looks dismal.

We are going to study Elijah the prophet. You will remember him as being God's prophet during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel over Israel. We will see how Elijah became despaired and depressed. Elijah thought he was all alone. Yet God had seven thousand believers that Elijah didn't know about. Elijah had experienced a great victory for God over the prophets of Baal. Yet right after this he forgot what God had just done and became so fearful for his life that he ran. How often do we forget about the great things God has done in our lives the minute we encounter a problem?

Question #1: Read 1Kings chapter 18. This will give you the context for Elijah's despair and depression which we will read about in the following chapter. After reading chapter 18 answer the following question: What was the great victory for God that Elijah experienced as his prophet?

Question #2: Elijah's hope turned into despair, and at his lowest point the LORD renewed him. Read 1Kings 19: 1-7:

(1) How did Elijah respond to Queen Jezebel's threat on his life?

(2) In what ways did Elijah show he was in despair and depressed?

(3) What kindness did the LORD show Elijah?

Question #3: Read 1Kings 19:8-10

- (1) Where did Elijah go 40 days later?

- (2) How did Elijah respond to the LORD?

- (3) In what way did Elijah show he was in despair?

Question #4: Read 1Kings 19:11-14

- (1) What was the LORD teaching Elijah?

- (2) How did Elijah respond in verse 14?

- (3) Does Elijah appear to have a pattern of being depressed?

Question #5: Read 1Kings 19:15-18 (especially verse 18)

- (1) What did the LORD have that Elijah didn't know about?

Question #6:

When we are depressed it will be good remember that our God is always at work not only in our life, but in the lives of others as well. There are things going on that we know nothing about. Things that may one day cast a whole new light on our problem. Nothing is ever hopeless with God. Just like the way Elijah kept thinking that he was the only prophet/believer left yet God had seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. **How will it help you to apply this principle to your life when you become depressed?**

Question #7: Each passage of scripture tells us something about how to handle despair and depression when we experience it in our lives.

- A. Read 1Corinthians 10:13. Sometimes our problems seem so big and we feel like no one else has the same difficulties that we do. How will this passage of scripture help you when you are in despair or are depressed?
- B. Read Ephesians 1:6. How will this verse help you when you've been rejected or betrayed by someone close to you?
- C. Read Romans 8:26-27. Explain how these verses will help you when you are in such despair and depression that you can't even put your thoughts into words when you try to pray?
- D. Read Romans 8:28. Describe how will this verse help you to accept those things that do not make sense to you?

Question #7 continued.

- E. Read Philippians 3:12-14. In what way will this verse help you when you are troubled by your past failures and sin? How do these verses provide direction for you?
- F. Read Philippians 4:4-7. Read each verse slowly and think about how you can receive the peace of God in every situation. Describe how you will follow these verses when you are in despair or feeling depressed.
- G. Read Philippians 4:8-13. We are given good counsel in these verses. If we would follow this counsel we could avoid a lot of the despair and depression that we experience. Consider these verses then write the steps you will follow to practice these verses in your life. You will want to pray first about this and use this time to truly examine your life and how you can make it more in line with God's will for you.
- H. Let's close our lesson on despair and depression by reminding ourselves just how much God loves you! There are many verses about His love for you in the Bible. These are just a few. Read them and let the words soak into your heart and mind. Then pray and thank God for His love!
Read Psalm 31:7; Psalm 116:15; Lamentations 3:21-23; Romans 5:8; Romans 8:35-39; 1John 4:10.