

Depression

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."

1 Kings 19:3-5 (NIV)

As a person who has suffered from clinical depression, I have a special place in my heart for others who are in a dark valley and life seems hopeless. Because of my own experiences living with depression I feel some small ability to speak to those who are still in this dreadful state.

I well recall times when I would wake up in the morning and simply pull the covers over my head and seek consolation in sleep. So when we read of Elijah's depression and his desire to sleep I remember my own situation and have sympathy for the poor man.

It is very important to deal gently with such people lest we drive them further into the darkness around them. Elijah prayed to die, but the Lord made him live another day. After some time—perhaps a few hours or days—he received a heavenly messenger calling out a very simple message, "Get up and eat".

When someone is depressed they lack motivation to do anything to help themselves. For example, a depressed man

will possibly cease shaving and showering for a few days until his smell drives him to personal care. A depressed wife and mother may cease helping cook and clean up after mealtime. The home may degenerate into a sloppy mess while the depressed person stumbles around the house.

Other depressed people, like myself, were able to function—but at a slower pace than normal. Elijah came off his greatest spiritual victory only to slide down the slippery slope of depression until he hit bottom and wanted to die to escape the pain of his situation.

God's answer to Elijah's depression was to wake him up and call out to him to eat what He had prepared for him. Depressed people sometimes go off their normal diet and lose weight. God's first step in restoring Elijah was to get some food into him. So Elijah got up and ate. However, he lay down and slept again. Then the angel woke him up a second time and told him once more to rise and eat. Elijah obeyed once more and then walked the journey God had

planned out for him.

So we see that it can take two or three times to get the person to start reintegrating into normal society—but it happens when they are gently nudged and not scolded. Patience with the depressed is so vital to a good outcome. And in my situation I had loving, patient, and persistent friends who carried me along in the Lord's Name.

Do you know someone who has experienced some overwhelming disaster that may have left them bewildered and lost? Be kindhearted, be gentle with them, speak comforting words from the Psalms. Psalm 73 is a great Psalm to read to such a soul or 1 Peter 1:6-9. Compassionate tender care of these people will pay off as they bathe themselves in your loving actions on their behalf. Draw near these people for whom Christ died and with prayerful ministry revive their tender faith.

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