

## Session #2: Fighting Self Pity, Envy, and Discouragement

Grief or Self-Pity?

1. Grief is an intense state of sadness associated with the loss of a significant person, or aspect of one's life.
2. **Self-pity is ultimately an accusation that God is not adequately pitying me in my suffering—both in his assessment of my situation and in the action he takes in response.** Self-pity is our sinful, selfish response to something not going the way we think it should.

You might be struggling with self-pity, or even worse, self-hatred, if you:

- Are calling yourself a failure
- Listen to the voices inside of you that tell you how horrible of a person you are and that no one cares or will love you, including God.

Biblical examples:

1 Kings 19: Lessons from Elijah

### 1. A failure to take care of ourselves physically can compound problems.

- Elijah has run over 200 miles to get away. He's physically tired, hungry, and worn out. His outer body is having impacts on his inner body. Far too often in history, even church history, Christians have acted as if our bodies don't matter. Much of what we have learned comes from Plato, not Paul. Plato taught the body was a prison house for the soul. But God created us body and soul, not simply soul. This means that we should not devalue our bodies.
- Now as we've said, our bodies cannot make us sin. But we must take our bodies into serious consideration, as we fight self-pity, envy, bitterness, or discouragement. We want to be aware of our bodies, to know what factors contribute to us being more vulnerable to sin. Common factors include:

-Hunger

-Tiredness

-Lack of exercise

-Health factors (such as diseases, sickness, etc)

-Hormones (women)

### 2. Isolation is not the answer.

- Isolation is not God's solution to our suffering. God designed to body to work together so that when 1 member suffers, all suffer. God lovingly uses your troubles to *engage* you in the body of Christ (*Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 12:14–26, esp. 12:26*). Suffering can draw us closer to others, make us more dependent, etc.

### 3. Self-pity makes self the king, not God.

- Self-pity includes a number of other problems. For example:
  - a. When we are in self-pity, we find more satisfaction in nursing the failures and past hurts of others against us, than we do our sins against them.
  - b. Self-pity blinds us to the cares and concerns of others. All we see is how bad we are hurt.
  - c. Self-pity judges the motives and actions of others. We assume the worst about others, unlike 1 Cor. 13.
  - d. Self-pity rejects the attempts of others that seek to show love. They can't do it well enough.

e. The “I deserve” mindset fuels self-pity. The more we are convinced that we deserve, the harder it is to navigate life when things don’t go our way.

f. Self-pitying looks for those who coddle instead of correct. It seeks out flattery and a fan club. Self-pitying can easily manipulate others-“I’m just the worst person in the world, aren’t I?” The desire is for others to tell them, “Of course not. You’re so special.”

#### **4. Self-pity, envy, and discouragement thrive when worship dies.**

- Self-pity, envy, bitterness, and discouragement are all worship problems. If you notice the change between chapters 18 and 19, you will notice the change of worship. In chapter 18, Elijah was focused on the Lord. His worship was centered on God alone, as it should be. He wasn’t scared, even though it seemed as if he was the only one. But something changes in chapter 19. God is absent from his thinking and focus, especially in a positive way. The only thing he wants the Lord to do it to take his life.
- Where are you when it comes to worship and suffering? Do you recognize any ways in which a focus off the Lord, and onto yourself has resulted in self-pity, discouragement, envy, or bitterness? If so, the solution is to:

-**Recognize** heart and fruit

-**Repent** of heat and fruit sins

-**Replace** ungodly desires, attitudes, actions, etc with God-pleasing ones

-**Redirect** your focus on Christ and his goodness

#### **5. Unbiblical thinking and feelings over facts, and buying into lies.**

- Elijah’s view of reality was not accurate. When he looked around at everything, all he could see was that he was alone and everyone else was against him. Instead of seeing life through God’s lenses, he was seeing things through his lenses-distorted by sin. His feelings became elevated over the facts of who God is, and what God is doing.

### **The Cure for Self-Pity, Envy, Bitterness, and Discouragement**

The antidote to these is remembering:

- a. Your hopelessness, helplessness, and rebelliousness apart from God.
- b. Remembering God’s faithfulness, mercy, compassion, and might (Psalm 103).

What truths about God do you need to remember right now?

#### **1. Remember that God gives help in the temptations we face to give into self pity, envy, discouragement, and bitterness.**

*1 Corinthians 10:13–14, No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*

1. We will face difficult trials and temptations in our life

- *James 1:2, Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. . . .*
- *James 1:12, Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*
- *James 1:13–14, When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. . . .*

Our trials/temptations are not unique.

- Others before you {*Rom 15:4; Heb 11; 12:1; Jas 5:7–11*}.
- Others around you {*Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 12:26; 1 Peter 4:12–19; 5:8–9*}.
- Jesus, the God-Man above you {*Heb 2:10–18; 4:15–16; 5:1–10; 12:1–3*}.

Your sovereign, faithful, mighty God assures you that by his grace these trials/temptations will not be too difficult for you {*Gen 39; 1 Cor 1:8–9; Isa 41:10; 2 Tim 4:16–17; Heb 4:16*}.

Your God always provides a pathway through which you can escape sin and follow him in the midst of these trials/temptations.

## **2. Embrace the right view of hardship and suffering:**

God uses hardships to make people more like Christ: <sup>1</sup>

- 1) God lovingly uses your troubles to *enhance* your relationship with him (*Psalms; 2 Chron. 28:22 and 33:12*). Christians in hardship tend to become more God-conscious and tend to turn to God.
- 2) God lovingly uses your trouble to help you *experience* Christ's sufferings (*Phil 3:10; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34–35; 19:41; John 1:10–11; 16:32; Acts 9:4–5; Rom 9:1–3; 10:1*). Our sufferings are light compared to those of our Suffering Savior
- 3) God lovingly uses your hardships to *expose* your remaining sin (*Deut 8:1–3; John 15*). God uses trials to boil away dross in us, including our blind-spot sins.
- 4) God lovingly uses your troubles to *exhibit* Christ's work in you (*Matt 5:13–16*). Hardships give us an opportunity to reflect Jesus to others.
- 5) God lovingly uses your troubles to *equip* you for wiser, more compassionate ministry (*2 Cor 1:3–4*). God comforts us in our hardships so we can comfort others.
- 7) God lovingly uses your troubles to *elevate* your longing for Christ's return (*1 Pet 1:3–9, 13; Jas 1:12; 5:11; Rev*). Earthly hardships create a proper dissatisfaction with this fallen world, and a longing for the new heaven and earth and for all the eternal blessings God promises.

## **3. Use the right value system and standard of measurement**

- Social media tends to reinforce self-pity as we compare ourselves to others. When we use the wrong value system to measure ourselves, we end up in nothing but failure. The right standard of measurement is what God says about us, and how God measures success.

## **4. Remember what God in Christ has done for us, is doing for us, and will do for us:**

Our hope is self-pity is Christ, the one who did not give into self-pity, envy, discouragement, or bitterness. Jesus was tempted like we were. He knows the particular challenges we face to go down the trail of self-pity. Even more than us, he knows what injustice is like. Jesus knows what it feels like to receive hatred for doing right. He has experienced rejection and the loss of close

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Jones, *When Trouble Shows Up: Seeing God's Transforming Love* (New Growth, 2013).

friends. More than any of us, he knows what it is like for the king of the world to be hated, persecuted, and killed.

Psalm 13:

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

<sup>2</sup>How long must I take counsel in my soul  
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

<sup>3</sup>Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,

<sup>4</sup>lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"  
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

<sup>5</sup>But I have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

<sup>6</sup>I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Further study:

- Ahab in 1 Kings 21
- Jonah (chapter 4)
- Genesis 50:19-20
- Micah 6:6-8
- Matthew 5:3-10
- Matthew 6:9-15
- Matthew 18:21-35
- Mark 11:20-25
- Luke 6:32-36
- Luke 23:32-34
- Acts 7:54-60
- Romans 12:17-21
- Ephesians 4:30-5:2
- Colossians 3:12-13
- Study men and women in the Bible who have suffered, such as: Noah, Joseph, Moses, Naomi, David, Jeremiah, and others. Describe how you see their faithfulness to God despite their suffering.
- Read the psalms to see that although they start out with complaints, they end up with praise for God and His faithfulness.
- Read the passion narratives and study Christ's reaction to suffering.
- Study biblical themes such as propitiation, mercy, and grace. What has our sin done, and what response could God give against it? What has he done instead? Read Romans 3:21–26, Romans 5:1–11, and Hebrews 10:19–24, and other related passages.
- Develop a list of 5 things you can be thankful for each day. Include these in your prayers and let others know.