



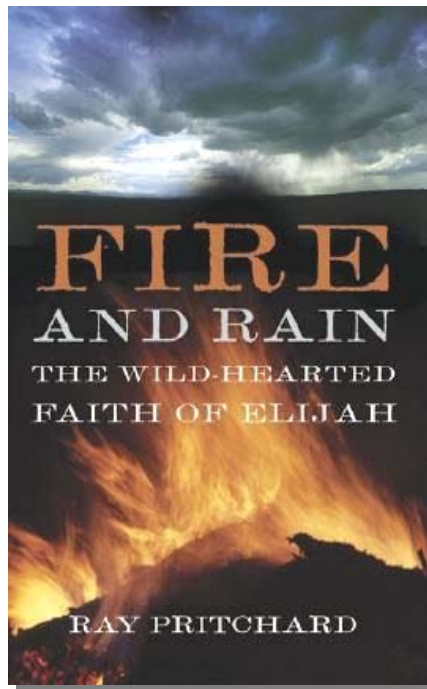
DEAN WELCH – TEACHER

Cure for the ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Summertime BLUES... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**WEEKLY SUNDAY
SCHOOL LESSON**

JULY 4, 2010

LESSON #5 FROM THE **MASTERWORK** SERIES STUDY OF:





Cure for the
Summertime BLUES...

JULY 4, 2010

Phuck Swindoll tells the story about a young college student who had a summer job as a welder's assistant, building a hospital. The young man had never welded before in his life. He was afraid of heights and, wouldn't you know, they put him to work welding on the 17th floor! Vast sections of steel beams were jutting out over nowhere. He worked, almost immobilized by fear, from day to day. Finally, an "incredible hunk" of a welder with whom he was working looked at him and said, "What's the matter son? Are you scared?" The young man said, "S-S-Scared? I've b-b-been t-t-trying to t-t-tell you for t-t-two weeks 'I q-q-quit!' but I c-c-couldn't get it out of m-m-my m-m-mouth." He was scared to death! Fear immobilizes and often intimidates. We often find ourselves bogging down in our spiritual growth simply because the challenges before us look absolutely impossible. And if we're not careful, we can end up in a state of depression and have our own little "pity party."

I heard about a man who lived in Wales several years ago and had the misfortune of being involved in a mining accident which required the amputation of his right leg. After a stay in the hospital, he went to a prosthesis maker to be supplied with an artificial leg. When the new artificial leg had been strapped to the stump, which was all that remained of the injured leg, the attendant requested that the patient get up and walk across the floor. Awkwardly, the man struggled to his feet and staggered across the room. Then, dragging himself painfully back to his chair, he slumped into it, utterly exhausted and discouraged. "That's not how to do it," said the attendant. "Watch this!" Then he walked gracefully across the floor. "Ah," exclaimed the patient, "It's all very easy for you because you don't have any disability." "Oh, haven't I?" replied the attendant. "Look." Pulling up the legs of his trousers, he disclosed that he was not wearing just one artificial limb, but **two!**

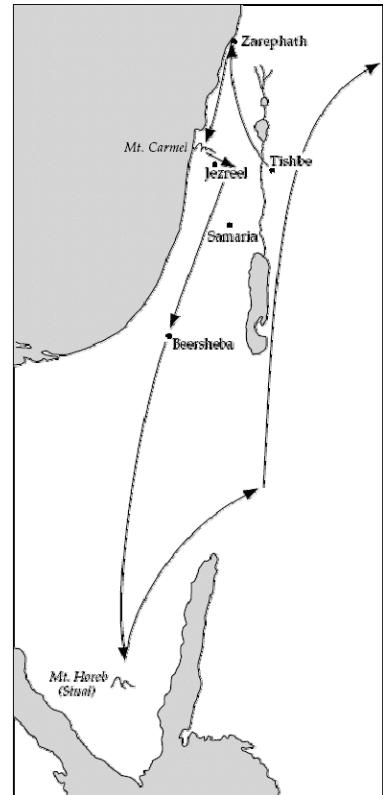
In our society today we fear all kinds of things, don't we? Just this week I read that "*ordinary children today are more fearful than psychiatric patients were in the 1950s.*" Although we are not often running for our lives in a physical way, we are scared and fearful. **What causes us fear? What are some common things that people are afraid of today? What about you?** We fear looking stupid. We fear losing our jobs. We fear not knowing. We fear not mattering. We fear not being loved. We fear running out of whatever we need. We fear insignificance. We fear being sued, finishing last, going broke; we fear the mole on the back, the new kid on the block, the sound of the clock as it ticks us closer to the grave.

Isn't it amazing that we sophisticate investment plans, create elaborate security systems and even legislate stronger military—yet we depend on **mood-altering drugs** more than any other generation in history. As I was thinking about this lesson this week and what **I** fear deep down, I saw came across this commercial on TV [PLAY PAXIL TV AD: [HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=F8XHVEYEG9S](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8XHVEYEG9S)]

Based on that ad, we should have **nothing** to fear! Right?!? Take the drug and BAM, **all is well!** I can't begin to list all of the drugs out today which claim they can calm our fears and end our depression: *Lexapro, Xanax, Zoloft, Prozac, Paxil, Wellbutrin, Celexa, Remeron, Effexor or Zyban.* WOW! But please don't think I'm minimizing that depression often involves genuine medical issues or that there's anything wrong in using all necessary medical means when that is appropriate. But when you see the ads, it makes me wonder if the answer is really that or if it's something deeper. Today, as we wrap up Week Five of our study from Dr. Ray Pritchard's book *Fire and Rain*, we're looking at Elijah's battle with the same problems—fear leading to depression.

This week's lesson is from **1 KINGS 19** and is probably my favorite passage in Elijah's life. It was kind of hard to relate to Elijah calling down fire from heaven in last week's lesson, but I can certainly identify with him this week. But first we need to

understand the setting, so I included a map on your handout this morning to help you. (DISCUSS) Elijah has just won a great victory at Mt. Carmel over the prophets of Baal, the Canaanite false god who demanded ritual prostitution and child sacrifice. The Israelites who witnessed this demonstration apparently turned to God and God has ended the 3-plus year drought he brought upon them because of their idolatry. As **1 KINGS 18** ends, we see Elijah outracing Ahab back to Jezreel, where he undoubtedly anticipates Ahab and Jezebel's repentance or surrender or defeat. Listen to those final two verses [45-46 (ESV)]: ***45**"And soon the sky was black with clouds. A heavy wind brought a terrific rainstorm, and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel. **46**Then the Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel."*



WOW! Talk about a mountain-top experience. Yet, very similar to what we talked about a few weeks ago in 1 Kings 17:1-2 when Elijah appeared out of nowhere and said there'd be no rain or dew for years and then **God told him to leave and hide**, something similar is about to happen here—except it's not because of what God tells Elijah to do. Let's pick up our story in **1 KINGS 19: 1-10 (NLT)**: ***1**When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. **2**So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them." **3**Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. **4**Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. **"I have had enough, Lord,"** he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died." **5**Then he lay*

down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" ⁶He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you." ⁸So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. ⁹There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

What a contrast! Up to now, Elijah has been the epitome of spiritual courage—now he collapses, runs away when Israel most needs his leadership (possibly missing the chance for national repentance), and turns into a suicidal basket case. We can't forget something important here, however. Does anyone remember the words of **JAMES 5:17 (NIV)** about Elijah that we talked about several weeks ago? *"Elijah was a man just like us..."* Don't miss that—he was described as a person just like us! He suffered discouragement, despondency and depression. And on this occasion, he couldn't shake it and is flat-out **depressed** and runs.

As I think about these verses, I'm glad that this chapter was included in Scripture. Don't you love it when God paints a portrait of His men and women, but doesn't ignore their weaknesses or hide their frailties—showing them *"warts and all,"* as Chuck Swindoll says. Elijah's depression also reminds us of the fact that being committed to God does not necessarily exempt us from getting seriously depressed. No one is exempt and it's not a matter of I.Q., age or social class. Some of the greatest people in history have struggled with feelings of depression. Who said this? *I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were*

distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful soul on earth. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die to be better." Ever felt that way? *"I must die to be better."* **Abraham Lincoln** felt that way because those were his words.

You learned this week that Elijah's depression was the result of a "perfect storm"—the coming together of several common causes. But isn't that just the way our old adversary works? The first element is what we might call **unrealistic expectations**. Look again at **1 KINGS 19: 4**: *"I've had enough"* means *"That's the last straw—I can't take any more."* He is referring to **19:2**—when instead of repenting or surrendering, Jezebel orders Elijah's death. He undoubtedly sees this as an end to his ministry when he probably had expected that the dramatic victory on Mt. Carmel would result in Ahab's and Jezebel's repentance or judgment. When this didn't happen, Elijah collapsed in despair.

As I've said on other occasions, one of my favorite daily devotionals is *My Utmost For His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. If you read his devotionals, then you understand why. If not, I've handed out a copy of his July 28th devotional because of its significance to what we're talking about today. Look at the first paragraph of the devotional: *"We tend to think that if Jesus Christ compels us to do something and we are obedient to Him, He will lead us to great success. We should never have the thought that our dreams of success are God's purpose for us. In fact, His purpose may be exactly the opposite."* Now skip down to the next to the last paragraph: *"God's training is for **now**, not later. His purpose is for this very minute, not for sometime in the future. **We have nothing to do with what will follow our obedience, and we are wrong to concern ourselves with it.**"*

It is easy to get in trouble by letting legitimate spiritual desires turn into expectations that go beyond what God actually promises, isn't it? This happens most often by expecting that key people in our lives will make good decisions about God. Of course we desire that they do this, and we pray to this end. But God has never

promised that our desires or prayers (or even God himself) will overturn people's free will. As I say that, I'm reminded of one of our prior memory verses from **ISAIAH 55: 8 (NLT)**: *"My thoughts are **nothing** like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are **far beyond** anything you could **imagine**."* When we base our emotional security on people's choices rather than God's faithfulness, the result is serious depression. That's what hit Elijah.

I think the second factor in Elijah's collapse came because he was **physically and emotionally exhausted**. Imagine the physical and emotional toll that the showdown on Mt. Carmel had. For many days (possibly weeks), Elijah's life was on the line. Even though God empowered his 18 mile run to Jezreel, he would have been physically exhausted. This exhaustion left him without any emotional resilience when Jezebel's response disappointed his expectation. Make no mistake about it: to serve God is to be "on active duty." This means a busy life—and occasionally periods of extreme activity and stress. And we have an enemy who does not play fair—he will ruthlessly attack us when we are weakest. Listen to what Paul tells us about serving God in **COLOSSIANS 1:29 (NCV)**: *To do this, I **work and struggle**, using Christ's great strength that works so powerfully in me.* But having said this, some of us (including myself) wind up in a state of serious spiritual depression because we chronically overdo. **Is that a picture of you? Do you live the exhausted Christian life?**

Another factor that probably made things far worse for Elijah when he started to *fall apart* was being alone, that is he was **relationally isolated**. Look back at **verses 3 and 4** and tell me what he did with his servant. The Scripture says he "*left his servant,*" and "*he himself*" went **alone** "a day's journey into the wilderness." Elijah wanted to be alone and discouraged people are lonely people. **Is this common when you are depressed? Is it a good idea?**

If you've ever been seriously spiritually depressed, you know how desirable this feels, how rational it seems. The more depressed

you get, the less you want to be around anyone. You just want to zone out by sleeping, watching TV, eating, drinking, etc. But what you need most is to open up to friends who know and love you and can spiritually encourage you. They can help you "*bear this burden*" (Gal.6:2) when you are being crushed by it. Conversely, withdrawing from them almost ensures deeper depression and decisions that make matters worse. When we get discouraged, the first thing we tend to do is to get alone. And that's often the worst thing we can do.

So, Elijah should have stayed with a trusted friend or comrade who could have pumped encouragement, strength, and objectivity into him. That is one of the best things he could have done. That courage transfusion would have kept him strong. But it's interesting how human nature works.

But let's look at how God met Elijah in his desperate moment of discouragement and despair. After Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah had all played their parts, God steps in. So, let's look at how God restores Elijah—the order is important.

First, God allowed Elijah a time of rest and refreshment. See the words in **verse 5**. No sermon. No rebuke. No blame. No shame. No lightning bolt from heaven saying, "*Look at you! Get up, you worthless ingrate! Get on your feet. Quickly, back on the job!*" Instead, God said, "*Take it easy, my son. Relax. You haven't had a good meal in a long time.*" Then look at what happened. He catered a meal for Elijah of freshly baked bread and cool, refreshing water. WOW. How gracious and compassionate of God. Don't you love this picture? It reminds me of the words of **PSALM 103: 13-14** (TEV): "*As a father is kind to his children, so the LORD is kind to those who honor him. He knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust.*"

Exhaustion can make you turn emotional cartwheels. Fatigue can lead to all sorts of strange imaginations. It'll make you believe a lie and that's what Elijah was doing—because he was exhausted. So,

God gave him rest and refreshment, and afterward Elijah went on forty days and nights in the strength of it.

Second, God communicated wisely with Elijah. Look at **verse 9**: *There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"* God didn't come to Elijah and say, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, young man." He didn't say, "Snap out of it, Elijah. You shouldn't feel like this." Instead, God asked a question—a simple question of clarification: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And, can't you just hear Elijah's self-pitying and whiney come back? "

Look again at **1 KINGS 19: 10**: *¹⁰Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."* Elijah was believing the lie! "... I alone am left." It's like he saying, *"I'm the only committed one, I'm the only one who really cares about your cause. It's all up to me—and I can't bear this weight anymore."*

Do you ever feel that way? It's easy for Christian workers to slip into this attitude. Saying to yourself, *"LORD, if I don't do it, it won't get done. It's just me and you LORD!"* Eventually, you start to feel self-pity because of the crushing burden you feel like you have to carry for God! And if this goes on too long, you want to quit and run away because you're "burned out." A little Messiah complex. It's hard to play Messiah when you're not!

But God graciously listened to him. God didn't say, *"That's dumb, Elijah. How stupid can you get?"* God didn't rebuke his *down-in-the-dumps* prophet. No, instead, look at what God said: *"Elijah! Get up and walk out of this cave. Man, it's dark in here. Go out there and stand in the light. Stand on the mountain before Me. That's the place to be encouraged. Forget Jezebel. I want you to get your eyes on Me, Elijah. Come on, I'm here for you. I always will be."* Listen to the words from **verses 11-18** from Peterson's

paraphrase in *The Message*: ¹¹⁻¹²Then he was told, "Go, stand on the mountain at attention before God. God will pass by." A hurricane wind ripped through the mountains and shattered the rocks before God, but God wasn't to be found in the wind; after the wind an earthquake, but God wasn't in the earthquake; and after the earthquake fire, but God wasn't in the fire; and after the fire a gentle and quiet whisper. ¹³⁻¹⁴ When Elijah heard the quiet voice, he muffled his face with his great cloak, went to the mouth of the cave, and stood there. A quiet voice asked, "So Elijah, now tell me, what are you doing here?" Elijah said it again, "I've been working my heart out for God, the God-of-the-Angel-Armies, because the people of Israel have abandoned your covenant, destroyed your places of worship, and murdered your prophets. I'm the only one left, and now they're trying to kill me." ¹⁵⁻¹⁸ God said, "Go back the way you came through the desert to Damascus. When you get there anoint Hazael; make him king over Aram. Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi; make him king over Israel. Finally, anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Anyone who escapes death by Hazael will be killed by Jehu; and anyone who escapes death by Jehu will be killed by Elisha. Meanwhile, I'm preserving for myself **seven thousand souls**: the knees that haven't bowed to the god Baal, the mouths that haven't kissed his image."

WOW! God showed Elijah that he still had a job to do—that there was still a place for him. Disillusioned and exhausted though he was, he was still God's man and God's choice for *"such a time as this"* (ESTHER 4: 14). And, as far as this I'm all alone stuff went..., *"Well, Elijah, let me set the record straight,"* said God. Notice **verse 18** again: *There are seven thousand faithful out there who have not bowed to Baal. You're really not alone. At any given moment, with the snap of My divine fingers, I can bring to the forefront a whole fresh battalion of My troops.*" What reassurance that brought.

When we think that God has deserted us and moved on, who is it that has really moved? US! His Word tells us in **HEBREWS 13:5 (NIV)**, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”*.

What hinders you today from having this kind of faith? Jesus is our provider. In a time when we read of war, the stock market being erratic, corporations cutting back, people losing jobs, and prices for goods and services continuing to rise, we wonder how we will make it. Yet, we can have peace in our souls because we know that no matter what happens with the economy, no matter what happens in Iraq, no matter what happens PERIOD, Jesus will provide. Do you have His peace right now?

Let’s Pray.

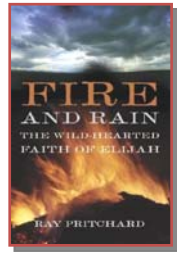


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Cure for the
Summertime BLUES...



1. Ordinary children today are more fearful than _____ were in the 1950s. Although we are not often running for our lives in a physical way, we are scared and fearful. Why?
2. Elijah's depression also reminds us of the fact that being _____ to God does not necessarily _____ us from getting seriously depressed. No one is exempt and it's not a matter of I.Q., age or social class.
3. _____ *have nothing to do with what will follow our _____, and we are _____ to concern ourselves with it.* – Oswald Chambers (July 28th devotional)
4. **ISAIAH 55: * (NLT)** says, “*My thoughts are _____ like your thoughts,*” says the Lord. “*And my ways are far beyond anything you could _____.*”
5. In restoring Elijah, **first** God allowed Elijah a time of _____ and _____.
6. The **second** way Elijah was restored was that God _____ wisely with Elijah.
7. When we think that God has deserted you or moved on, who is it that has really moved? _____! His Word tells us in **HEBREWS 13:5 (NIV)**, “_____ *will I leave you; never will I forsake you*”.