

FAQs

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When we read about people in the Bible, it is easy to explain away their story by saying, “But that was Moses or David or Elijah.” We are not expected to follow their examples because they possess qualities that we could never have.

Yet, according to James 5:17, “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.” The NIV translates that “Elijah was a man just like us.” He had a special calling from God, no doubt. But he was a man. He had ups and downs, times of joy and sorrow, periods of prosperity and adversity. Just like us. And that means he had occasions of discouragement.

The fact that there was a man in the New Testament who was called “the son of encouragement” ought to tell us that even God’s people are at times in despair. The problem is not that we experience these emotions but how we seek to handle them. So, the question is not, “why are you discouraged?” The question is “what are you going to do about it?”

Have you ever tried to call customer service? After waiting so long on hold, they direct you to their website where you find the “FAQs:” Frequent Asked Questions. That assures us that there are people who have the same questions we have. They are “just like us.”

Isn’t it amazing that when we are in the midst of dealing with things we may not understand, that we ask more questions? We can’t answer the ones we have, but we think introducing more will help. Just like Elijah in 1 Kings 19.

1) **“Why me?”** Twice, Elijah pled his case before the Lord. “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword” (1 Ki. 19:10,14). Why don’t you go pick on them? Twice, God had His own question for the prophet: “what are you doing here Elijah” (19:9, 13)? Here isn’t where I called you to work. Get back there and get busy.

What is the divine answer to this FAQ? “You can handle it.” “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man. And God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear” (1 Cor. 10:13). Whatever load you are bearing right now, God knows you can handle it. Besides, are you better than Elijah? Moses? David? Jeremiah? Paul? What are you doing here?

2) **“Why bother?”** If the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, why try? Elijah went from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows. “He requested for himself that he might

die, and said, 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers' (1 Ki. 19:4). Just like Moses (Numb. 11:15) and Jonah (Jo. 4:3). Elijah thought, "I have been no more successful than they. Why try any more?" To which God provided him food and drink to sustain him for his journey ahead.

God's answer? "Trust Me." We equate "unanswered prayers" with the assumption that God does not care for us. Really they are prayers where the answer was "no." Elijah prayed, "Take my life." God said, "No. Just trust Me." I wonder Elijah thought about that when he was later taken up to heaven in the fiery chariot and whirlwind.

3) **"Who cares?"** "I alone am left. And they seek my life to take it away" (1 Ki. 19:10, 14). Elijah could only see what was missing. God showed him what was still there. "I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed the knee to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Ki. 19:18). God has not forgotten His people. A faithful remnant remains who serve Him.

The response from heaven to this FAQ? "You're not alone." Discouragement can give us tunnel vision. "No one understands" or "I'm the only one going through this." One of the benefits of the local church is that when we come together, we can look around and see who cares. These are people who are just like us. Instead of isolating ourselves, we ought to be surrounding ourselves with those who have not bowed the knee to discouragement.

Two people appeared and spoke with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration: Moses and Elijah. He who ran for his life and then requested that he might die actually never saw death. He was just like us. And when we see Jesus coming in glory, toils of the road will then seem as nothing. No question about it.