

Connect360: Running on Empty

June 5, 2023

- *Lesson 12 in the Connect360 unit "How Great Is Our God: Passing the Faith Along" focuses on 1 Kings 19:3-8.*

What do you do when you are afraid? Many people do what Elijah did. Physically, mentally, emotionally and relationally, we take flight. We try to act like the problem is not reality, stuff it in, hide from it, and act like it never happened. We hope it will somehow just go away if we choose to ignore it. Yet, fleeing from our struggles rarely leads to them going away.

Others, approach their fears by fighting. Going after those who have hurt you, seeking revenge, and trying to bring about your own justice oftentimes lead to escalated pain and tension. There is a time and place to sit down with someone and try to talk through struggles you have faced, but to do so prematurely will likely intensify the problem and the resulting anguish. Fighting rarely leads to a decrease in anxiety.

Whether we use fight or flight to address depression, we rarely see a positive outcome. Elijah ran for his life. Leaving his servant behind at Beersheba in Judah, he continued running another day's journey into the wilderness. Perhaps he hoped to hide from Jezebel's soldiers, but no matter how far he ran, Elijah could not hide from the voices in his own head.

When he reached a broom tree, he wanted to die. The broom tree is a type of large shrub that grows in the desert of Judea and across Arabia. Like Jonah after the repentance of Nineveh (Jonah 4:6-9), Elijah crawled up under the plant and was so dissatisfied with life he no longer wanted to live.

Physically exhausted from running, hungry and thirsty from being without

food and water, and emotionally unstable due to his fear, Elijah reached the end of his rope. Mentally, the great prophet who just witnessed the showdown of God on the mountainside, was now in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4).

In his honesty, Elijah turned to God and said, "Enough!" There are a lot of people in the world today who have had enough of the pain of life. Life is not fair. People are not always kind. Sometimes things do not work out as we hope. Terribly bad things happen in our lives. Jobs are lost, divorces happen, and our loved ones die. There are no easy answers to tragedy. Christians should avoid the glib clichés and well-intentioned pat answers. Life is really hard, and there are many who cry out and say, "I cannot take this anymore."

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