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**Date:** July 3, 2022

**Speaker:** Pastor Ryan Brooks, [Vertical Church](#)

**Text:** 1 Kings 19

## INTRODUCTION

Well good morning Church. It is always a pleasure to be here with you all, it is always good to be with family. We praise God for the elders and leaders here who always care for this church so well.

One of my favorite hymns is: **Turn your eyes upon Jesus,**  
**Look full in His wonderful face,**  
**And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,**  
**In the light of His glory and grace.** Helen H. Lemmel in 1922

I have shared with some of you that in the winter of October 2018, I was diagnosed with a severe case of clinical depression.

I was headed to our Christmas service for 2017 and while on the way to preach 3 services that Sunday morning I leaned over to my wife as seriously as I could be and

said babe, I don't want to go preach today. I think I am going to go on to my parent's house and have my mom cook me breakfast. They lived about 2 miles past our church. My wife looked at me and laughed, and then she realized that I was serious.

I drove straight past my church and headed toward my mother's house. My wife said, "Ryan what are you doing? We have church."

I turned and made our way to church.

I preached to 3 packed services, God was glorified, the gospel was proclaimed, people made decisions for Christ, and by most metrics it was a good day, yet I left depressed.

We didn't have church the following Sunday as we close for the last Sunday of the year and I thought I will get a much-needed Sunday off and I will be ready to jump back into ministry.



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As the first Sunday of the year approached, I had my sermon ready, but my heart was not. I did what I saw other pastors do when they needed to be inspired. I went to go hear another preacher preach.

The Saturday night before our first service of the new year I was sitting in the back of a church trying to get myself to preach the next morning.

After that Saturday night service I went to dinner with my family and a few leaders and while at dinner I got a phone call from our facilities director telling me that we had bad news.

A pipe in the attic of our building froze over and burst and the church was flooded. I rushed to the church in the dark of night to find the church that I had put my blood, sweat and tears into; I now had to walk through in water. As I walked up, I could see water coming from out of the doors.

Unfortunately, that was not the real tragedy of this story. The real tragedy was that as I stood on the platform of

our sanctuary looking over our sanctuary looking down at the water and seeing the reflection of the lights on the ceiling, I was glad.

I was not broken, angry, sad, disappointed, I was glad because now I would not have to stand and preach in the morning. I knew at this very moment that was deeply wrong and proceeded to contact my primary care physician who later that year diagnosed me with depression.

This is my story but it has also been God's glory in my life.

I want to talk about a subject that robs us of hope, unlike any other, Depression.

Today I come as a brother to share just a few ways that I have learned to see God's glory in my little jacked up story.

As a person that is actively in a constant battle with depression, I have come to define it as not just merely being sad, or down but my own working definition has



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come to simply mean existing without hope. I know that is not a clinical definition but that's mine.

It drives me into the arms of my heavenly father.

It drives me into the biblical community.

It has driven me to God's word.

I would be lying if I said that is all it has driven me into.

Often before it drove me into the comforting arms of my heavenly father, it has driven me to seek comfort in other places.

- It has driven me to overeat.
- It has driven me to overwork.
- It has driven me into isolation.
- It has driven me to pornography.
- It has trapped me in bed.
- It has caused me to stumble over my words.
- It has caused me to lack attention.
- It has caused me to become foggy in thought.

I have had to learn to take the wheel not of control of my thoughts and feelings but where I am looking.

When I bring the brokenness of Depression, I have learned that the object of my gaze will either draw me near or drive me away.

Today, I do not want to arrogantly assume that a sermon could possibly bring you out of Depression.

Today, I do not come to talk you through it or out of it because I understand as well as anyone that with something as heavy as depression in a sermon alone is insufficient. I hope today that what we can do is redirect your gaze.

Again, I would say that from my own personal experience of feeling hopeless that what has often changed was not my situation but what I set my sight on.

So let's look at a story of what I believe to be depression and what we can take away from this narrative about the God that we can look to for hope in the midst of life's tough situations.



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### **1 Kings 19:4 (ESV)**

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

We will look at what it means to draw near to God and not be driven into despair and how his glory can be revealed in the life of depression.

**Main Idea: Our gaze upon God draws us away from our discouragement of self.**

I need to give two contextual frameworks for us today that I think are really important for us to walk together today.

I need to give a scriptural context of this verse.

Honestly, right before these verses from the prophet Elijah, God had been working for him and through him in ways that are Hollywood Blockbuster-like.

Let me run it back real quick.

First of all, the book of Kings walks through the various Kings and the division of the Kingdom of Israel - their rise and fall and the prophets that warned them and some that followed them and followed God no more.

If there is one prophet that represents the Prophets of the Old Testament, it would have been Elijah

Prophets' primary responsibility was to talk to the people on behalf of God. Most often as a warning and a call to repentance.

King Ahab is King and 1 Kings 16:33 says that he angered God more than any other King before him. He married Jezebel and worshiped the God of her Father Baal.

King Ahab has been searching for Elijah, and Elijah comes forth and says, "What's Up," and they had an incredible prophet battle. It was Elijah the Prophet of God Yahweh vs. 450 of Ahab's prophets of Baal. It was in front of all the people and Elijah is calling them out, like



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“how long y’all going to worship Baal and God? If God is God, worship him, and if Baal is God worship him.”

Elijah says let's settle this right now.

We are both going to build an altar and we are going to both pray to our gods and ask them to send down fire. Whoever responds and consumes the bull sacrifice will be God.

So the 450 prophets of Baal cried out to Baal to send down fire and nothing happened. They did this all day.

Elijah even began to mock them, say that their God must be on a journey, or sleeping, or relieving himself. The 450 prophets cut themselves with swords as was their custom and nothing happened.

Then Elijah built his altar of 12 stones representing the tribes of Israel. He dug a trench around his altar then asked the people to drench his altar with water 3 different times so that the water would fill the trench. So when

God came and consumed the offering, there would be no doubt that his fire was from the true God.

Sure enough, he calls the fire from God that the people would believe and God sends fire that consumes the burnt offering.

How could this great encounter lead to Elijah being depressed?

You don't jump straight to depression. Some would argue in the clinical sense that you might have a depressive episode. I would affirm that.

I want to give another contextual understanding that I think would help us understand Depression, especially as it relates to stages.

**Disappointment** - An expectation is not met whether it is an expectation of self or even another.



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**Downcast** - is an immediate feeling of sadness. It is strictly circumstantial. It is specific to something happening. You can put your finger on it. This thing happened and it made me sad. Traditionally when you are downcast the next day you are ok up and ready to go at it again.

**Discouragement** - When downcast lingers a for 3-4 days. The circumstances have not changed yet and you have not figured out a way to handle the moving forward. This can last for a few weeks at a time.

**Depression** - If discouragement lingers and it becomes a pattern of thinking that is not related to any specific thing instead it becomes a general outlook on life now we're talking depression. The circumstances have changed but your outlook has not.

**Both psychological and physiological factors can cause this. Depression has both a biological and psychological influence.**

**Depression begins to bleed not just from what has happened but now from how you see yourself and the whispers of who you are becomes screams to your heart.**

**Despair** - Depression lingers; everything becomes wrong and will never change. People do very desperate things when they are in a place of despair. We see unfortunate decisions made, even ones that can be fatal.

It is in the outflow of these two contexts that we will evaluate Elijah and his gaze and how we can learn from his situation.

When I look at the narrative of Elijah I see three major ways that he needs to raise his gaze and I believe again that raising our gaze alone will not rid us of depression but it causes us to look to God and the many various tools and resources that he has provided both biblically and professionally.



### 3 Areas to Raise Our Gaze

#### Situation Evaluation

#### Self Evaluation

#### Sovereignty Evaluation

The first place we need to raise our gaze is our evaluation of our situation. Let's listen again to Elijah

#### 1 Kings 19:4 (ESV)

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

What is causing him to feel this way specifically?

#### 1 Kings 19:1-3 (ESV)

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3 Then he was afraid, and he

arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

See, Elijah had just received a message from the queen of King Ahab Jezebel who had sent word that she would take his life by this time tomorrow. He runs for his life out of fear.

Now let's be clear, that was a legitimate threat by a person that had the capacity to at least make an attempt on his life. The concern that I see here is that he has only considered this lone situation for evaluation.

Did Elijah forget what literally just happened just versus before? Elijah made that one thing everything.

Let's go back and see God's faithfulness.

#### 1 Kings 17:1 (ESV)

1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."



In that same chapter ravens brought him bread that God commanded.

Later, he is sent to a widow who was down to her last and God blessed her so that she could feed the prophet miraculously.

That widow had a son who **1 Kings 17:22 (ESV)**  
**22 And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.**

He was raised from the Dead.

Did I mention how God sent down fire earlier with Elijah?

**1 Kings 18:37–40 (ESV)**  
**37 Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust,**

**and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.” 40 And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.” And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.**

Not only that but it rained again, this was after the whole prophet showdown.

**1 Kings 18:44–46 (ESV)**  
**44 And at the seventh time he said, “Behold, a little cloud like a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.’ ” 45 And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. 46 And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.**





Do you see this, Elijah has forgotten the whole situation. Yes, you have gotten threatened. That's not all.

**We cannot misread conflicts for conclusions**

Elijah often suffered from an Exaggeration of Evaluation - His Evaluator can give false negatives. When God asked Elijah later in the text why he had come to Mt. Horeb, Elijah responded like this.

**1 Kings 19:9–10 (ESV)**

9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

You might say this seems to be fair but let's look closer.

**1 Kings 18:22 (ESV)**

22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men."

The problem was this was not true on two accounts. In the previous chapter, we meet a man that feared the Lord greatly named Obediah.

**1 Kings 18:13 (ESV)**

13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water?

So there are at least 100 other prophets, you are not the only one Elijah.

Secondly, it was not that all the people had turned from God because there were those that saw the showdown at Mt. Carmel that worshiped God.

**1 Kings 18:39 (ESV)**

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God."



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Here is the bottom line for this point: We are not the best at situation evaluation. We need to bring our evaluations to God and others and ask them to help us see maybe where we can't see.

This is not to deny what you are feeling and experiencing, but what you are experiencing and feeling needs God to give it context.

I believe this is one of the ways that a therapist helped me when I was first diagnosed with depression. She did not tell me what I was feeling was not true; she helped me see that what I felt was not all.

That is often the harsh overwhelming feeling of depression that it feels as if what you are experiencing is everything. We are not trying to get a second opinion but a complete one simply. My disappointment, discontentment, and discouragement make it hard to evaluate well.

#### Covid Rapid Test vs Regular Test

The original evaluation can give you a false positive or false negative. Sometimes our rapid evaluation can give

us misinformation. I need to evaluate my situation with God in mind. At times I need God to zoom me out to see the bigger picture. I need to take my situation to God to ask him to help me evaluate my situation. I need to take my evaluation to my community.

#### **APPLICATION**

Are you doing situation evaluation in isolation?

Here is your gaze statement: I find hope in my evaluation because this is not all.

I need to raise my gaze above my circumstance.

This is what is so hard about depression if it feels and appears that what you are facing can't get out of your way to see anything other than what you are facing.

Your gaze is limited, your gaze is distorted, your gaze has blind spots, but the way God sees a thing is so much more complete, and considers things that we overlook.

**The second area we need to raise our Gaze is in our self-evaluation.**



I believe this may be the key component between discouragement and depression.

Depression often speaks not to what has happened but to who we are.

I am not merely discouraged about what has happened, but I am depressed because of how I see myself in light of what has happened.

**1 Kings 19:4 (ESV)**

**4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."**

It's right here in the text, Elijah does a poor job of evaluating the situation but he now leans to defining who he is by his evaluation of his situation.

Elijah clearly says I am no better than my fathers. What exactly is he talking about? Elijah, essentially says:

**Situation = I have failed**

**Self = I am a failure**

Let me explain, Elijah says I am not better than my fathers because of what Jezebel has said.

His expectation was that after this great demonstration that clearly the God of Elijah was the one true God that Jezebel would capitulate and the pagan worship would be over.

He says that he is no better than the prophets that came before him as they failed to purge Israel from Idolatry, hoping to see complete revival.

By his standard, he was a failure and this defined himself as such.

His broken view of the situation led to a broken view of himself.

Identity Problem

There are three major struggles we experience in this world that we need to take note of.

**Sin Struggle** - generally occurs from making wrong moral choices and experiencing the consequences of those choices.

**Suffering Struggles** - occur due to living in a fallen world broken by sin. Evil is real and people sin against others. Not only suffering from sin but



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because of the fall, our bodies and minds will suffer from disease and eventually fail us and we know that there is suffering that comes as a byproduct of the first sin. This was not God's original direction and design but the result of sin.

**Identity Struggles** - occur when we identify ourselves by the wrong things. When we trade descriptions for definitions. What I do is not who I am. Misplacing my identity in the wrong things will often lead to struggle. Identity in your career, your money, your ethnicity, your nationality, your gender, your family, anything other than Christ.

It had become evident that while Elijah had called on the name of the Lord, he also put his Identity in his performance.

If he could not live up to his standard, it was not worth living anymore to him.

You are more than your performance.

You are more than your health and strength.

You are more than what you bring to the table.

### Self-Warning Signs of Vulnerability

**Ministry Output** - Let's be clear, that serving others, whether in the Church, in our families, or in our marriage, can put us in a vulnerable place if we do not bring our gaze upon God.

We can look at the situation and feel like we are not making any progress, ministering but not feeling that we are making moves.

Providing for our children but not raising our children

Caring for our loved ones, but nothing happened.

Elijah had just poured out in ministry output, and he was vulnerable

I think this is one of the reasons why we see Jesus retreat to be with God after ministry output.

I don't know how you but while Jesus did miracles, multitudes left following him. I often wonder if he ever felt like a failure. I am sure he needed to retreat to hear God repeat those words he mentioned at his Baptism.

You are my son, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased.



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**Relational Conflict** - Elijah has been going back and forth with King Ahab, and finally at the end of chapter 18, Ahab actually listens to him.

Let's be honest relational conflict can cause you to think, is there something wrong with me?

Living with relational conflict can leave you depleted and drained on so many levels.

Being emotionally empty, and lacking the actual capacity to feel your feelings can cause you to be vulnerable to moving rapidly from disappointment to depression.

**Physical Exhaustion** - This was one of the primary culprits of my depression.

I had terrible sleep patterns.

Not only did I have to take anti-depressants but my doctor also prescribed sleep aids that really changed so many different things for me.

Exhaustion really is another thing that can make you more vulnerable to depression. Imagine trying to swim

and you are already tired. You don't have the energy to move forward and you are losing the energy to keep your head above water. Don't go swimming when you are tired.

**Genesis 25:29–34 (ESV)**

29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." 32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" 33 Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

**Situational Victory** - We have already stated that we see Elijah should have seen his victory but the problem is that it sent him on a self high, which left him vulnerable to a greater self fall. Even in his momentary success because his identity was in the wrong thing he crashed hard.



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## Fun House Mirrors at the Carnival

The mirror provides a distorted view of who you are. You are indeed in the mirror, but the mirror does not reflect an accurate view. Money, Success, Possession, Accomplishments, and Performance are like funny mirrors. We cannot trust them as tools of self-evaluation.

We need to respond to this point simply by saying this is what has happened or happening, but it is not me.

I am not what I did, or did not do.

I am what God says I am.

## Sovereignty Evaluation

The final area we need to consider to raise our Gaze in is our Sovereignty Evaluation.

Elijah needed a reminder to remember that God was still all-powerful.

If I'm honest here, at times my depression has impacted not only how I saw my situation, myself but also how I saw God.

I have had my on pity parties, saying what God can't do and what he won't do.

I have needed to be drawn back to God to reevaluate his reign.

I want to show you four ways that God revealed his sovereignty to Elijah.

## Provision

### 1 Kings 19:5–8 (ESV)

5 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." 8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

Right where Elijah said I want to die, God sent a food that he might live. Elijah had essentially given up as he had left his minister in Beersheba. God provided for Elijah in



the wilderness. The Angel of the Lord came multiple times to remind that all you need is in me.

### Power

Elijah arrives at Mt. Horeb, also known as Mt. Sinai. He arrives at this Mountain known as the Mountain of God. He is there ultimately to rebuke, but he receives revelation.

#### 1 Kings 19:9–10 (ESV)

9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 10 He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

He comes to the presence of God to tell God you let me down but he is about to be reminded of the sovereignty.

This is the same Mountain where God met Moses, and he is about to meet Elijah.

#### 1 Kings 19:11 (ESV)

11 And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.

### Proximity

He did not just show him his power but where he was

#### 1 Kings 19:12–13 (ESV)

12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Some believe this last picture of a whisper was not just that God would work in the big miraculous but the small subtle things in the life of Elijah.

I could not help but consider that the whisper communicated that God was near.



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You do not whisper from afar.

I am here with you Elijah

Elijah responds by covering his face because he knew that he could not see God and live. This was just like Moses when he hid his face in the cleft of the rock.

Plan - Even though he thought in verse 4 that this was enough, it was over, and it was time to die.

God tells Elisha this is not the end you still have work to do.

1 Kings 19:15–16 (ESV)

15 And the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.

18 **Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."**

Our gaze to God calls us to remember that "It's not Over"

Today I want to leave you raising your gaze.

My story is not that I defeated depression.

My story is not that I overcame it by my will.

My story is not that I have found the secret sauce to managing depression.

My story is that when I learn to set my gaze on God, he draws me.

My story is that when I learn to set my gaze on God, he does not fix or resolve my problems but I see them in light of him.

My story is that when I learn to set my gaze on God, his voice speaks louder about me than my own voice speaks about me.

My story is that when I learn to set my gaze on God, his sovereignty remains in full view.





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**Lilias Trotter** (1853–1928) originally from London, England was an anointed artist who had a potential career path if she chose to take it.

While she loved art, she also felt a calling from God to reach the lost. She began engaging in this call while in London by going out into the streets in the late hours of the night by herself to reach and rescue prostitutes off of the streets. She also felt a calling to share Jesus with the unreached people groups in Algeria in Northern Africa.

Believe in Darkness what you have seen in light.

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!*

*Thro' death into life everlasting,  
He passed, and we follow Him there;  
O'er us sin no more hath dominion--  
For more than conqu'rors we are!*

*His Word shall not fail you--He promised;  
Believe Him, and all will be well:  
Then go to a world that is dying,  
His perfect salvation to tell!*

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.*