

# BELPRES CHURCH

## How To Be Restored

### 1 Kings 19:1-18

Speaker: Scott Dudley

*Disclaimer: This transcript was computer generated and may contain errors.*

---

Well, great to see those of you who are joining us online. Those of you in the room on this three-day weekend, President's Day, thank you for being here. It's great to have you. Jesus wants to give you a gift. He wants to give you and me a gift. In the busyness of our lives, the stress of our lives in the problems that we face, either in school or career or relationships, craziness of an election year, Jesus wants to restore you and me to mental, emotional and spiritual strength. And that's the sermon series we're doing called Restore. And the biblical word for being restored, the Bible's word for that is Sabbath, and we talked about that a little bit last week. And Sabbath is way more, way deeper than just taking a day off. Sabbath is when we are connecting to God, to friends, with family, when we are doing activities that restore us to the kind of mental, emotional and spiritual strength that we were originally designed for.

Years ago, the Dodgers baseball team... Pitchers and catchers reported this week, so it's baseball season. The most wonderful time of the year. Years ago, the Dodgers baseball team was managed by a guy named Tommy Lasorda and there was a pitcher there named Orel Hershiser, which isn't a great name for a pitcher. Nobody's going to be intimidated by a guy named oral. And he was kind of small, mild-mannered, pasty kind of guy and he struggled as a pitcher at first. And one time he was on the mound and his pitching wasn't going very well at all. So the manager, Tommy Lasorda, went out to the mound and shook him by the shoulders and said, "When I look at you, I don't see a scared, skinny, pasty little kid. I see a bulldog. So from now on, I am not going to call you Orel, I'm going to call you Bulldog."

And that was the turning point in his career. He began to pitch a lot better after that. Hershiser refers to that talk as the sermon on the mound, and there was this one game where the Dodgers were playing the Mets and the Mets pitcher was a guy named Ron Darling. And everyone knew that the Dodgers were going to win because Tommy

Lasorda was in the dugout yelling, "Get him out, Bulldog, get him out!" Meanwhile, the Mets manager, all he could shout from the dugout was, "Throw strikes, darling." Jesus, Jesus is like Tommy Lasorda. He can make us bulldogs, He can restore us to mental, emotional and spiritual strength even in the middle of our problems, our fears, our worries, and that is the gift He wants to give us.

And today we're going to look at a story in the Bible 1 Kings 19, how God does that for a very discouraged prophet named Elijah. And it says, "Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword." So Ahab and Jezebel are the king and queen of Israel, and they're forcing everybody to worship a false God named Baal. And in the previous chapter, Elijah set up a kind of a contest and whichever God sent fire down from heaven, that was the real God. So this is just a chapter before, so the prophets of Baal, they call on Baal, but nothing happens. But when Elijah prays, God sends fire down from heaven. And then Elijah had all the prophets of Baal killed, which seems extreme, but the prophets of Baal were actually killing everyone who worshiped God and other atrocities like child sacrifice, that sort of thing. So not good people.

Well, Ahab and Jezebel, they didn't like that. "So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, 'May the God's deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like one of them.'" In other words, she sent people to kill and Elijah. And Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. He ran. Do you ever just want to run away and escape from the problems and the pressures of life? What this story is going to show us is that restoration is different than and better than running away and escape. Because a lot of the ways we try to manage stress and pain and fear and all that is kind of escape, running away things, scrolling through social media endlessly to just kind of numb ourselves or binge-watching some show or buying a new something, a new car, new kitchen, new something, right? Always looking forward to the next vacation. And none of those things are bad and some of those things are even good, but they aren't the same thing as being restored to our original design, the way God wants to restore us.

And in this story, Elijah could basically write a book called How to Get Discouraged in a Few Simple Steps because he basically does almost everything wrong to get more and more discouraged. So I want to talk about what does Elijah do wrong to get discouraged, and then how does God restore him? And in several ways, all of which will begin with a letter R. And the first step in Elijah's book on how to get discouraged is forget what God has done in the past. Okay, just 24 hours earlier, God sent fire down from heaven. If you are a prophet, that is a career high. That definitely goes on the resume. That definitely goes on the college application, called down fire from heaven in my junior year in high school, right? You're getting into that college.

So you would think that after that when Elijah heard that the queen was trying to kill him, he would've said something like, "Oh, please. Tell it to the hand. I just called fire down

from heaven." But just 24 hours later, he's discouraged, exhausted, running away, wanting to escape. And that happens sometimes. Sometimes things are going great, work is great, and then it's not. The relationships are going great, but then it's not. Sometimes things can be going great, and then suddenly they're not. First half of the week, awesome. Last half of the week, not so awesome.

This week someone reminded me about a time when I was preaching and I was trying to say the phrase English versions of the Bible, but instead I said English virgins in the Bible and everyone was like... you all paid attention, that's for sure. For the next week afterwards, people kept saying, "Scott, I'm a little confused about translations. Do you think the new international virgin is the best one?" The week was going so well this week until I was reminded of that. And when that happens, we get discouraged. And when we get discouraged it's easy to forget what God has done in the past. So the way God restores us is to remember. Remember the hard times He's brought us through. Remember the good things He has put in our lives like friends or family, and other things right? And the command to remember is all throughout scripture. Remember.

Then it says, "Elijah came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough Lord take my life. I am no better than my ancestors.'" So here's the second way, really good way to get discouraged, and that is wear yourself out. Elijah's exhausted, challenging kings and queens, calling fire down from heaven. That's hard work, right? And some of you are discouraged, worried, anxious because you're just doing too many things. Job, school, work, sports, whatever it is, volunteering for too many things, maybe even here in this church. And yes, it is good to volunteer to be part of Jesus's rescue mission that gives us life. It's good to do that. But one or two things, not too many things. Elijah here says, "I'm no better than my ancestors." Well, who asked you to be? Who asked you to be nobody? God didn't. What have you taken on that God has not asked you to do? What might you have taken on that God has not asked you to do?

Then the text goes on, "Then he laid down under the bush and fell asleep." Sleep matters, right? "All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around and thereby his head was some bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water." So this is the second way God restores this, and that is through rest. It's just that simple, rest. The angel shows up. What's the first thing this angel does with this despondent prophet? Does the angel show up and say, "Fear not?" Nope. Does the angel show up and say, "I bring you good news?" No. Does the angel say, "Do you want to talk about it, Elijah?" No. The first thing the angel does is he makes Elijah sleep and then he cooks some food. He doesn't say, "This is your fault, Elijah, you haven't prayed enough. You don't have enough faith. Have you pled the blood of Jesus? Have you confessed your sins?" Those are all good things, but Elijah also has a physical nature, and Christianity is unique in that it takes our physicality seriously.

Most religions say we have a body and a soul, and the only thing that matters is the soul, not the body. The Bible does not share that worldview. The Bible says that we are body and soul together and the body matters, which is why God came Himself in a human body, in the person of Jesus. And our bodies need rest, which is why God gives us the gift of Sabbath. One day in seven to rest. It's not a legalistic obligation. It's a gift and we need to rest from, and we need to rest for. We need to rest from work or even thinking about work, which can be challenging for me sometimes. Rest from social media, a little bit of it is fine, but too much of it stokes our anger, our fear, our envy, all of which depletes us. Rest from chores. And then rest for connection to God, meaningful relationships, activities. We delight in, things that are fun. Fun is part of Sabbath. God made his body and soul. We need to deal with both.

So the angel shows up, he bakes Elijah what the text calls a cake of bread. So angel food cake, literally. And sometimes it is just that simple, eat right, exercise, go to sleep. When you're working on some problem and you can't figure it out, go to sleep. When you're up late at night, stressed out, go to sleep. The Bible says God's mercies are new every morning, so if you get to the end of the day and you're stressed out, it's because you've run out of that day's mercies. So you need to go to sleep and wake up and get a fresh batch of mercy.

Then the text says, "Strengthened by that food he traveled 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God." Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. "And the word of the Lord came to him. 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' And he replied, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars and put your prophets to death with the sword. And I am the only one left, and now they're trying to kill me too.'" And the Oscar for best dramatic performance goes to...

Here is step three on how to get discouraged, focus on the lies. It is true that the queen is trying to kill him, but it is a lie for Elijah to believe that that means God is not working in his life. It's also a lie when he says, "And I'm the only one left." It's also a pity party, but it's also a lie because in just a few verses, God's going to say, "Yet I reserve 7,000 in Israel whose knees have not bowed down to Baal." In other words, there are 7,000 people on your side, Elijah, and you can kind of see Elijah going, "Okay, well other than them, I'm alone." He's focusing on the devil's lives, that because things are hard, God is not at work and he is all alone.

So the way God restores us in that situation is to replace the lies with God's truth. And I don't mean ignore the problems and hardships of life, but in the middle of those hardships, what are God's truth? The marriage may be really difficult, but the lie is it can never get better. No, God's truth is he can heal marriages. The job or school or whatever may be really difficult. And the lie is you're always going to be stuck in this and this is going to wreck your future. No, the truth is God is powerful enough to get you to the

future he has for you no matter what obstacles you face. "So the Lord God said, go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord for the Lord is about to pass by. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper."

Which brings me to step four of how to get discouraged and that has put God in a box. The fact that Elijah is out at Mount Sinai shows that he has God in a box because Mount Sinai was where Moses received the ten commandments from God and there was fire and there was an earthquake. So Elijah is expecting God to show up the exact same way he showed up for Moses, in a fire and in an earthquake. But here God comes in a different way, in a gentle whisper. In the original Hebrew it says a silence audible, which might've been like the just a sense of God's presence, something like that.

Now, sometimes God does speak in dramatic ways, miracles and that sort of thing, but other times he's more subtle. And if we confine God to our boxes of what we think He does and what He does not do or insisted that He show up in ways that He showed up for us in the past through this particular kind of music, or this preacher or in this place or in this way, we're going to get discouraged because we won't see how He is at work in our lives now.

So to be restored, release God from the boxes that we've got him in. And don't pray, "Lord, do this, do that." Instead, pray, "Lord, show me how you're working in my life now. Not like you did back then, but how are you doing it now? And help me hear the ways you're speaking now." Because God speaks in lots of ways, the Bible, thoughts in our heads, circumstances, other people, pictures in our minds, dreams, music, right? If God seems silent, it's often because we are not listening for Him the way He's speaking to us now, we're expecting Him to speak like He did back then and Sabbath, part of Sabbath is slowing down enough to hear Him. So God shows up in a different way, not earthquake, wind or fire, but shows up in a different way in a whisper. And then He says for a second time, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"

And then Elijah repeats his little speech verbatim, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars and put your prophets to death at the sword. I'm the only one left." I think the reason God asked him twice, what are you doing here is because Elijah wouldn't stop talking. So got to be like... Which brings me to another way to get discouraged, and that is to run from the battles of life. When God says, "What are you doing here?" He's not asking for information. It's not like God's like, "Oh, Elijah, wow, what a surprise. What are you doing here? Hey, you look terrible. What's going on?" That's not the question. The question is, what are you doing here, Elijah? Why are you running away?

See, there's a difference between restoration and running. Running is just trying to escape through addictions or travel or something. Restoration is when we gather new strength to face the battle again. "So the Lord said to him, 'Go back the way you came.'" So one of the ways God restores us is to return us to the battles of life. And that's what he does with Elijah here. We need rest. But Sabbath is not retreat. Sabbath is not running away. Sabbath is not escape. Sabbath is being restored for something restored to return to the things God has called us to. Psalm 23 says, "In the presence of my enemies, that's where you prepare a table before me." Not on the sidelines, not on vacation. You get this image of a battlefield, the arrows are flying, and in the middle there's Jesus and saying, "Here's the table, I'm going to meet you here, in the middle of your struggle, in the middle of your battle. I'm going to meet you here."

And the reason that we sometimes don't feel like we're winning that battle is we have not connected with Jesus. We have not Sabbath with him. We aren't being restored so that we can have the energy and the courage to return to the job or school or parenting. And God will meet us there and do great things there. Which brings us to the end of this story. The last couple of verses, God says to Elijah, "Go back. And when you get there, anoint Jehu king over Israel, anoint Elisha to succeed you as prophet. Yet I reserve 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal" which is the last point of how God restores us, and that is through relationships. This story ends with a list of names, Jehu, Elisha, who will become Elijah's assistant, 7,000 people who are on Elijah's side because part of Sabbath is community, eating meals together, enjoying each other's company. Community restores us.

So to review everything that I just said, Sabbath is time away from work to remember what God has done, to rest, to replace the lies with God's truth, to release God from the boxes we have him in, engage in relationships that restore us and return to the battle refreshed, renewed, restored. And last week, the action step we gave you wasn't go have a Sabbath day because kind of overwhelming to figure out how to do that in the realities of our life. So we're going to kind of baby step at a time, step into this one step at a time.

So last week, the action step was simply prepare to have Sabbath. So identify your day. I recommend Sunday because corporate worship is part of Sabbath. But if you've got a non-standard work week like me, it's going to have to be a different day. So for me, Friday's my day. And a whole day is best, but if you can't manage a whole day, at least manage half a day, okay? Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Perfection's not the goal here, okay? We're stepping into something. Identify your day, identify your people and your community because we are restored through community. And then identify where you may need margin, what you may need to cut out of your schedule.

Okay, that was last week, last week's action step was to prepare. This week's action step is, no really, prepare. We mean it. We're not giving these action steps to be ignored and forgotten 30 seconds after the sermon, which I actually sometimes forget my own action

steps. No, we're really doing this, Belle Pres. We are going to do this. We are going to live in it. We are going to live counterculture and have Sabbath because you will feel so much better. You will have so much more joy. You will be stronger, you will look younger, your hair will shine, mine will grow back. We're doing this thing because it is a gift, not a legalistic obligation. Have you figured out your day? Your community? Prepare. Next week will be a new action step, but this week prepare.

A friend of mine grew up with a father who was emotionally distant and her mother was mentally ill and she'd wake up at night to screaming, yelling, door slamming. And her parents eventually separated. And in her late teens, she ended up living with her mother who was mentally ill. And she was struggling in school. She had no friends, she was crying every single day. And the last straw was when her mom gave her dog away. The dog was the only source of comfort she had. Mom didn't even tell her it was going to happen. She came home from school and the dog was gone. And my friend thought, I'm not going to make it. There's nothing left for me. And she had always pictured God as this kind of stern, distant figure who would ignore her as long as she didn't rock the boat. In other words, she thought God was just like her parents.

Well, one day she came home from school and she heard a man singing Amazing Grace on the radio and then heard a pastor talk about the story of Jesus, God himself coming in human form to find us when we'd run away from him. And as she listened, her whole idea of God shifted. And she said, "I was aware in that moment that I was deeply and affectionately known by a God who I had not known. And I had no idea how big His love for me was until that moment and His love in that moment that clearly came from outside of me, it wasn't coming from in me. His love came from outside of me and filled up the empty places in my life." And she said, "I suddenly felt alive and happy and joyful." She said, "I stayed up the whole night reading the Bible and it just came alive to me. And I kept praying and I kept saying to God, 'I love you, God. I love you, God.' I had so much joy from nowhere at all other than connecting with Jesus."

Okay, that's Sabbath, she connected with Jesus. Replaced the lie that she was not loved with God's truth that she was. Released God from the box she had Him in that He was just like her parents. She rested in Him. And that gave her, that restored her to be able to begin to face some of the steep challenges she had in her life. And in fact, that Sabbath moment, she says, was the moment that changed her life. From there on, she began to Sabbath regularly, connect with Jesus regularly, and over the next few years began to heal from some of that childhood trauma and gain confidence and courage and hope. After college, she worked as a mental health professional, and then later she became a pastor, and now she leads a church. All of which started with that first Sabbath and everyone after that where God restored her to who she was created to be. Sabbath is not a legalistic obligation. It is a gift that Jesus wants to give us. So get ready and get prepared.



A pastor I know told me that people in his church send him stories from their lives to use his sermon illustrations, which is the nicest thing you can do for a pastor, by the way, just saying. But it's a really small church and so when he tells one of these stories, everyone's trying to figure out who it is in the church because it's a small church. And he said one day he quoted the poet Henry David Thoreau, his saying, "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." And a woman in the front row nudged her husband and said, "Oh listen, dear, this one is you." Like, okay, God does not want us to live lives of quiet desperation. He wants us to live lives of perpetual restoration. And when we sabbath with Him in the words of the prophet Isaiah, we renew our strength. We rise up with wings like eagles, and we soar because He gives strength to the weary and power to those who rest in Him.

So Jesus help us to do just that. In a culture that has too many things and too much stuff, and too many activities, and too many demands, Lord, help us to set aside time to connect with you. And when we do that, we experience your presence. Jesus, even as we sing one more song, even as we go from here, help us to go resting in you. Help us to rest in you the rest of this day and be restored and renewed to the people that you created us to be. We can't do it on our own so Holy Spirit, come and connect us to yourself and restore us. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions:**

---

*Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.*

**Opening Question:** Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What is the point of God's three "false starts" (vs 11-12; see Exodus 19:9,16-19)? What is God's message when he finally does speak?
- Compare verses 12-14 and 9-10. What does Elijah's unchanged answer imply?
- What does Elijah need most?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Share about a time when you felt discouraged and just wanted to run away like Elijah did. Reflecting on the sermon, can you think of a way that God restored you that was different than you anticipated or expected?
- How might a weekly sabbath practice bring restoration to your life? What barriers do you foresee and how can you prepare so that a day set apart to stop, rest, delight and worship is possible?



**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.

**This week's Sabbath practices:**

- Last week you identified your Sabbath day, where you need to create margin to make room for Sabbath, and named some of the people you'd like to invite into Sabbath with you. If you haven't done that yet, start with these. As you've processed this or prayed about this the past week, has God prompted you further in any of this?
- Prepare to start practicing Sabbath next week (we'll be adding more building blocks each week, but for now plan to set that day apart from your regular routine). Create an invitation and extend it to those you want to invite to Sabbath with you next week.
- As a family or a household, decide one thing each family member will do to help prepare this week for sabbath ( a chore, etc...)