



## **At the End of My Rope Series**

We've all been there. Our patience is gone. There's no energy left in the tank to cope with that conflict, that family member, this or that stress. What do I do when I'm at the end of my rope?

*Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. – Psalms 61:1-2*

In the times we live in, it seems that it's easy to lose hope. We feel this in the times we live in, the world we live in. Where do we find hope when we're at the end of our rope?

**Series Graphics:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sc/fo/lp7z8n0zxkqg07xivr2bv/h?rlkey=zjp6ge6krlhnmzfywnm2pljt&dl=0>

**Week 1: When you get to the end of your rope.**

**Week 2: Get some rest and eat some food**

**Week 3: What to do with self-pity**

**Week 4: A New Perspective**

## Week 1: When you get to the end of your rope.

**Psalm 40:1** I put all my hope in the Lord. Psalm 40:1

The psalmist chose hope. **Hope is a choice.** It's choosing to believe that despite our present circumstances, the future will be in some meaningful sense better than the present.

**Andrea Botchelli. During Covid, Botchelli sang by himself at Grand Cathedral in Milan on Easter. The cathedral was completely empty.**

<https://youtu.be/bpXwOSHTwsY>

His parents were told that there was a high likelihood that their child would be born with severe birth defects. But they had hope. After born, they found out he had severe glaucoma. But they had hope. 5 years old, playing soccer and the ball hit him and he lost the rest of his sight. Grew up blind as a teenager and off to college blind. But his parents had hope. He went on to get his law degree, but his real love was singing. Leaving behind a career in law - sold 90 million records around the world. He's a Christian - it's his hope in Jesus that compels him to say: Regardless of my present circumstances I believe the future in a meaningful way will be better than the present. So many times he could've given up, but had hope.

Botchelli sang on Easter - I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see"

What does he see? Psalm 40:1-3

The Hebrew word "Qavah" means "hope." The Etymology of the word Qavah goes back to the word "rope." How did rope become hope? What if?...**Hope is a lifeline that God gives us.**

When you are at the end of your rope, maybe our question should be: **Who is at the other end of your rope?**

### **We've been there: Elijah in 1 Kings 19**

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah was a paradigm of strength and determination against a massive army of Baal prophets. In 1 Kings 21, Elijah defied and frightened the king of Israel. But in 1 Kings 19, Elijah is hungry, exhausted, dejected, and even suicidal. *"He was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba"* (verse 3; the southernmost major city of Judah in the dry, arid region of the Negev).

Elijah does not "leave on a jet plane," nor does he "have a fast car." In ancient Israel, the prophet could only run by foot. Elijah flees in fatigue, hunger, thirst,

but afraid for his life, so he did not want to stop. He sleeps poorly, if at all, with the constant fear of being awakened and pursued by his enemies. He wakes before dawn to try to get more distance away from the queen. And once arriving in Beersheba, he continues for another day into the wilderness — not Minnesota northwoods style wilderness, but more like the hot, dry, arid Arizona desert. The prophet is physically and emotionally spent after the days of fleeing. He is spent.

*“It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors” (verse 4).*

## **Weeks 2-4: I Kings 18-19**

The final 3 weeks of the series we’ll explore the story of Elijah and how God encourages Elijah who is strung out, discouraged, depressed, believes God has abandoned him and is at the end of his rope.

God gives him 3 pieces of instruction:

- “Rest, Get up and eat”
- God confronts his self-loathing
- God give him a new perspective

Elijah was one of the few. He was a man marvelous in his courage, splendid in his strength, and astounding in his zeal for the Lord. And yet for all that, he was not unlike any one of us.

Elijah challenged the priests of Baal to a dramatic duel to the death atop Mt. Carmel. There he goaded them, prodded them, and humiliated them as they pleaded for their god, Baal, to reveal himself in some miraculous way. Baal never answered. Then, in an awe-inspiring demonstration of faith, Elijah called down the power of God. It came in one mighty blast of fire. And in that moment of victory, Elijah felt that all his problems had been solved, that his place in history had been secured, and that all would be right in the nation of Israel. Elijah felt higher than Mt. Carmel itself. He was on top of the world.

But what a difference a day makes! Just 24 hours later, Elijah received a message from the wicked Queen Jezebel: “You will be dead before tomorrow.” That was enough to bring Elijah crashing back to earth. He suddenly realized that, while he may have won a victory, the war was not yet over. Evil was still on Israel’s throne—and Jezebel had the power to back up her threat. Elijah’s understandable response was to run. He took off for the wilderness, hoping to

lose himself there. It was then that he crawled up under a juniper bush and said:

**“Lord, I’ve had it. I can’t take it anymore. I’m at the end of my rope. Lord, please take away my life.”**

## **Week 2: Get some rest and eat some food**

### **1 Kings 19:1-9**

#### **The first thing God says to Elijah: “GET SOME REST AND EAT SOME FOOD.”**

God understands that when your body is weak and weary, your thinking is likely to be weak and weary also. So God said to Elijah: *“Before we talk about the business of being at the end of your rope, get some rest and get some refreshment.”*

It is in that spirit of helplessness that God sends an angel to sustain Elijah. And that angel ministers to Elijah for forty days and forty nights at Horeb (interchangeable with Mt. Sinai where Moses met God). The angel provides the basic sustenance of food and water, but more importantly, this provision allows space for Elijah to stand still after the frantic flight from Jezebel. With forty days of forced rest and retrospection, Elijah is now ready to encounter God.

#### **Statistics about sleep and rest in America:**

- 70% of Americans aren't getting restorative sleep. While seven in 10 Americans are spending the recommended number of hours in the sack, just three in 10 are getting the right amount of good quality sleep to leave them feeling alert, cognitively sharp and energetic — or simply, “restored” — in the morning, a new study finds.
- The average person gets less than seven hours of sleep every night and 50 to 70 million adults in the U.S. are affected by a sleep disorder. Get more sleep stats [here](#).
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 3 adults in the United States reported not getting enough rest or sleep every day. Nearly 40% of adults report falling asleep during the day without meaning to at least once a month.

#### **Statistics about food/diet/eating habits:**

- According to the National Center for Health Statistics, about two-thirds of U.S. adults and about one-third of children aged 2 through 19 years are overweight or obese
- As of September 2022, 91% of parents surveyed noticed their family was less stressed when they shared family meals together.<sup>1</sup>
- 84% of adults wish they could share a meal with loved ones more often.
- Unhealthy diet contributes to approximately 678,000 deaths each year in the U.S., due to nutrition- and obesity-related diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. In the last 30 years, obesity rates have doubled in adults, tripled in children, and quadrupled in adolescents.
- **Diet-related deaths outrank** deaths from smoking, and about **half of U.S. deaths from heart disease** – nearly 900 deaths a day – are linked to poor diet.
- Americans now spend a higher percentage of their food budget on restaurants (50.3%) than they do on groceries (49.7%).
- 97 percent of the children's restaurant meals studied by the Center for Science in the Public Interest did not meet the expert nutrition standards for children's meals.
- Less than one-fourth of family dinners include a full serving of vegetables, according to a recent survey by Birds Eye.
- In 1970, Americans spent 26 percent of their [food budget](#) on eating out; by 2010, that number had risen to 41 percent. During that time, rates of obesity in the United States more than doubled.
- In fact, in a [recent study](#), 84% of parents agreed that family meals were important, but only 50% of family dinners were eaten together.

**Rest and refreshment.** Two men were in the Carlsbad Caverns. They were moving down a dark, narrow passageway when it suddenly crashed in on them. They were panicked, filled with stark terror. With their bare hands, they began desperately clawing at the rocks, until finally their hands were bruised and bleeding. And they were getting nowhere. At last in utter exhaustion, they stopped and stepped back and sat down for a moment. As they did the light of their flashlights illuminated the darkness overhead, revealing a myriad of diamond-like crystals. It was so spectacularly beautiful that they stretched out on their backs and looked at it for a few minutes. They were so exhausted that in that reclining position they quickly fell asleep. They slept only a few moments, but that was enough. They awakened refreshed. Now, calmed and controlled, they returned to their task—and in a short while the way to safety opened up before them. Those few minutes of rest and refreshment had made the difference.

So when you feel that you are at the end of your rope, do first what God told Elijah to do: “Get some rest and some refreshment.”

## **Week 3: What to do with self-pity**

**1 King 19:9-10** (or recap with 19:1-10)

The second thing that God said to Elijah was: **“STOP WALLOWING IN SELF-PITY.”**

Elijah’s words to God literally wreak self-pity: *“Lord,” he said, “I have worked so hard that the people have forsaken the commandments. They’ve knocked down all the altars. They’ve slain all the prophets, so that I—even I only—am left. And now they are after me.”*

### **Self-pity.**

Feeling sorry for ourselves. We know what that’s all about, don’t we? We all have a tendency to maximize the hardships in our lives. And, yes, many of us have significant hardships, but the problem with self-pity is that it at times minimizes our ability to see the many and rich blessings in our lives.

### **Have you ever heard this saying:**

Two men looked out from behind bars,  
One saw mud, the other stars.

### **Same window, same view.**

But it all depended on which way they were looking—whether they were looking up to God or looking down at yourself - your lot - in self-pity at the circumstances in which they found themselves.

Elijah cried out: *“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen.”* And God replied: *“Listen, Elijah, there are 7000 other people in this land who have not bowed their heads to Baal. You are not alone. So cut out this feeling sorry for yourself.”*

The difficulty is that so often we are looking down at our problems and handicaps, and we don’t see Him. It’s only when we start to look up that we begin to see Him and the love that He has for us.

The story of Elijah reminds us that when we feel that we are at the end of our rope, we ought to look around to see if we are misreading the situation simply because of our feelings of self-pity. You see, it might not be the end of the

rope at all—it just might be the beginning of it. That’s what it turned out to be for Elijah.

## Week 4: A New Perspective

**1 Kings 19:11-12** (1 Kings 19:1-15)

The third thing God said to Elijah was this: **“YOU NEED a new PERSPECTIVE.”**

**Elijah was so impressed with that awe-inspiring experience on Mt. Carmel that he decided that the success or failure of God’s game plan was going to be determined by Him alone.** So God said to him: *“Elijah, if you want to see something awe-inspiring, step up to the top of that hill. I’ll give you a real show.”* So Elijah did. And there came a great wind—a wind so strong that the mountains were split and the stones were cracked in half. That was awe-inspiring. But God wasn’t in the wind. Then came the earthquake that threatened to slake the whole of creation back into the dust. That was awe-inspiring. But God wasn’t in the earthquake. Then there came a blast of fire ten times more powerful than anything that Carmel had ever known. That too was awe-inspiring. But God wasn’t in the fire.

Then God said in a thin, small voice: *“Oh yes, Elijah, I can do spectacular things when I want to do them. But I don’t want to force or frighten people into my arms—I want to love them there. And please understand this, Elijah. My plans were made before you were born and they will still be being worked out when you are gone.”* That’s the King’s perspective.

### **Elijah wanted a miracle.**

An amazing wind shatters the mountain, followed by an intense earthquake, then a fire, and then a “sound of sheer silence” (verse 12). **Elijah wanted a miracle, but instead God was not present in the wind, earthquake nor fire.** God certainly controls these elements. But the passage instructs us that during difficult, painful times, **God is still there, and he reveals himself in silence.** God came to Elijah in quietness.

God then repeats the question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (verse 13). The prophet gives the exact same response. But at this point, something is different in the prophet who is no longer afraid but has witnessed something miraculous. The Lord instructs him to go.

This same prophet who boldly stands against kings is now driven to his lowest point, the man of God is still a mere man. But it is only when the prophet is in this weak state, he can find himself in a position to hear God in the stillness in

spite of the distracting wind, earthquake and rain. And God is there.

### **Jesus and Elijah were different.**

Jesus had the King's perspective. Elijah did not. Elijah, crouching under a juniper bush cried out, "It is enough!" Jesus, hanging on the cross, cried out, "It is finished!" Elijah, running to save his own life, cried, "I can't take it anymore." Jesus, pouring out His life's blood to save us all, cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." That's the King's perspective—knowing that God's still in control.

I think we have a tendency to see Jesus on the cross as he was depicted during the middle ages, a pale, ghostly, ghastly figure, spreadeagled against the sky—bloody, beaten, battered and besmeared. But that's not the way the early Church saw Him. They pictured Him on the cross, but they pictured Him wearing the royal crown on His head and driving the enemies of God before Him like He drove the moneychangers out of the temple. They saw the cross of Jesus Christ as being a part of God's ultimate plan for the redemption of the world. They saw the cross as God's trump card, God's master play, God's checkmate on evil. And that's what it was.

There on the cross, when Jesus was at the end of his rope, He searched out and took hold of the sure and certain knowledge that the victory belonged to God—and because it belonged to God, the victory would be His as well. That's the King's perspective.

### **Paul's on Perspective.**

In Romans chapters 7-12 Paul cries out: "*Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?*" Then he remembers that the victory belongs to God and he is in God's hands, so in the 8th chapter, he writes powerfully: "*I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" But then in the 9th chapter, he slips back into the hole again as he begins worrying about what's going to happen to his friends and loved ones in Israel. So in chapter 10 and 11, he wrestles through the problem until he begins to realize that they, too, are in God's hands. So what does he do? He sings a joyful doxology: "*O the wonder of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge and the power of God. To Him be the glory forever.*" Then it all comes together in the 12th chapter where, in light of God's final cosmic triumph in Christ Jesus, all Paul can say is: "*I appeal to you, my friends, present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to this triumphant God.*"

That's looking at life from the King's perspective. And when you feel you've

gotten to the end of your rope in life, hang on! Ultimately, God will give you what you need most!

Elijah reminds us that no matter what happens to me in life, this is still God's world. **For someone who feels that they have reached the end of the rope, that's very good news.**

**Sources:**

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-12-3/commentary-on-1-kings-191-45-78-15a-3>

<https://thewordmadefresh.org/sermons/when-you-get-to-the-end-of-your-rope/>

**Prayer of the day:**

Gracious God, sometimes we find ourselves in a place where we have nothing left and it's easy to lose hope. Restore us, lead us, and guide us when we're at the end of our rope. Amen.

**Prayers of the church:**

Holy Spirit, we ask you to be with us when we're exhausted and at the end of ourselves. Give us courage and strength to navigate overwhelming or anxious situations. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Jesus, you know firsthand the pressures of this world. Lead us to rest when we need rest. Help us to trust in your provision rather than our effort. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, we pray that you help us to see the abundant blessings you have given us. Lead us to a place of hope in the midst of struggles. Help us to listen to your guiding voice. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Generous Lord, we pray for those in our community who are struggling with grief, bad news, sadness. We ask for strength and for them to feel your encouraging love. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God, transform us with a new perspective, with a vision for this world that is led and guided by you. Help us to hear your still small voice. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.