

# Soul Reset: Take Care of Yourself

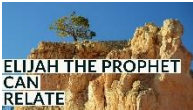


Since we're deep in the heart of cold and flu season, let's discuss a

scenario that may be familiar to you. You feel good; everything is fine.

And then you cough. And that cough leaves a lingering, all-to-familiar feeling. Scratchy. Uh-oh.. You know what's coming next: a cold. I don't know if you're the same as me, but I know that when that happens, it usually starts as a head cold and after a few days of draining, sneezing, and Kleenexes, it migrates down to the chest. Then begins the hacking and the coughing and the wheezing. In the midst of all of it, you just feel run down, lethargic, and just an overwhelming sense of blah. Time passes, Kleenex boxes hit the trash. And then comes that magical day where you start to feel better. You feel so much better and start to do all the things you've put off doing for the past few days. It's a big and busy energetic day. You. Feel. Invincible...

But then comes the next day. All the energy you had the day before is gone, and you somehow feel worse than even before. You've overdone it and it's coming back to bite you. You're worn down and maybe feeling defeated.

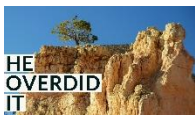


Someone who can relate to this on a much bigger level is Elijah the

Prophet, whom we read about in our scripture today, is having the second kind of day. But it's not because he's sick with a cold. Elijah is where he is in our scripture today because he has just been through a busy and spiritually challenging period that has left him absolutely drained, so tired that he can feel it all the way down into his bones.

Arguably, one of the most famous things that Elijah the prophet does is defend his faith in God and put to shame the 500 hundred prophets of Ba'al. But what if I told

you that's not all that he did in his ministry or even in this season of ministry? He had declared a drought in order to punish the Israelite nation for its idolatry, the worship of Baal, which had been encouraged by the queen, Jezebel. The drought had ended during that encounter with the prophets of Ba'al, and a God who would answer his prophet's call from heaven would be vindicated as the one true God. Elijah won the contest! But now he was on the run, fleeing to Beersheba to escape the wrath of Jezebel.



Basically, he overdid it. He's exhausted beyond all reason and he comes

to the very end of himself. He finds refuge under a solitary bush and cuts down to the very heart of what he's feeling: "It is enough now, Lord, take my life from me" "Just let me die." He is so exhausted and so overwhelmed by what he's been up to that he is ready; he's ready to just shrivel up in the sun under that solitary bush. He falls into a sleep, maybe hoping to never wake, but something stirs him from his sleep: an angel touches him and says, "Get up and eat." God through the angels had provided for his physical needs: he finds a biscuit and some water. Even though it isn't much, it's enough to address his immediate physical need. Then he sleeps. The angels wake him a second time, feed him a second time, and then remind him that he's on the move. He moves to Mt. Horeb, finds a cave, and rests.

God knew that Elijah needed rest and food in order to get back to the work he'd been called by God to do. God cared for not only Elijah's physical needs in order to deal with his spiritual well-being. After eating and resting, despite feeling just as defeated as Elijah did before, the Word of the Lord came to him and asks a question filled with so many different emotions: wonder, care, hesitation, grace: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"



Obviously, God knew what Elijah was doing; but what God was doing

was allowing Elijah to feel what he's feeling (like the psalmist two weeks ago) and feel absolutely everything that he had been feeling: joy, success, vindication. But at the same time hurt, exhaustion, and burn out. Elijah will go onto answer God that he's been zealous and busy for so long that he's just done. There are people chasing him, trying to kill him, and he just decides that it'd be easier to give up. Despite the successes he's celebrated and things by and large being good, Elijah feels this way.

Would you agree that life wears down even the best of us sometimes? In the *Soul Reset* book, Rev. Junius Dotson reminds us that if we allow our jobs and activities to work us into an early grave, then they will. God knew about the need to rest, finishing the work of Creation and then resting. God blessed the seventh day and called it special. What made it special? Rest. An intentional, set-apart time to rest from work and to rest in God's love is essential to a soul reset. We've got to stop the hustle in order to let our hearts, bodies, and minds reset.

Jesus knew how to rest and invited his disciples to rest. And he invited us into his rest when he said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He didn't say, "Come to me because we have a bunch of work to do." He didn't say, "Follow me and you will have to-do lists like you've never seen before." When we rest in Jesus, we lean into God's strength and remember that God can do what God is going to do, with or without us. Participating in God's work is God's gift to us, not a burden to bear.



Over the past few weeks I've been inviting you to a soul reset and

reminding us that our goal here at the start of the year is to learn the

unforced rhythms of God's grace. And I've been ending each message with a concrete example of what we can be doing to grow closer to Jesus. This week, I want to highlight a word and practice that I have to confess I'm terrible at, and that's the practice of Sabbath. I'm going to invite you into nothing this week. The past few weeks, I've talked about prayer, vulnerability, and fasting. Today, I invite you into nothing and letting that be enough. There's no new prayer to say, no new territory to explore. And that sounds hard, I know. But! Sabbath is a gift from God—a gift that gives us permission to rest, to stop, to be restored. It's not only a gift, it's also one of the Ten Commandments. Like I said last week, we are all bust and busy is inevitable. But God reminds us to rest.

Let me put it this way: not only did God remind Elijah to rest. God forced Elijah into a position of taking care of himself: forcing him to rest, forcing him to eat, forcing him to reflect and take stock of his reality. And God will do the same thing to us. So... maybe we need to rest right now before we get the cold and feel like a zombie or curl up under a bush. Take care of yourself in the name of Jesus. Amen!