

HOLDING THE LINE

A Five-Part Men's Bible Study

Session 1 — When the Strong Man Gets Tired

Main Passage: 1 Kings 19:1–18

Supporting Scripture: Isaiah 40:28–31; Matthew 11:28–30; Psalm 23:1–3

Main Idea:

Strength does not mean never becoming tired. Sometimes strength means recognizing that you are tired, admitting what you are carrying, and allowing God to restore you.

OPENING

Men are expected to carry things.

We carry responsibility for our families. We carry work. Bills. Decisions. Problems. Expectations. Other people's problems. Sometimes we carry things from twenty years ago that nobody around us even knows about.

And most of us have learned how to keep moving.

Somebody asks:

"How are you doing?"

We say:

"Good."

Then we go back to carrying it.

There is something good about endurance. Scripture repeatedly calls men to perseverance, responsibility, courage, and faithfulness.

But somewhere along the way, many men begin believing something Scripture never actually teaches:

A strong man should never get tired.

So when exhaustion comes, we hide it.

When we're overwhelmed, we work harder.

When we're discouraged, we get quieter.

When we're hurting, we isolate.

And eventually the man everybody thinks is holding everything together may be falling apart inside.

The Bible doesn't hide this reality.

One of the strongest men in Scripture reached exactly that point.

His name was Elijah.

1. EVEN STRONG MEN GET TIRED

Read 1 Kings 18:20–40 for context, then 1 Kings 19:1–4.

Think about what has just happened.

Elijah has stood on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal.

He challenged them publicly.

He stood essentially alone.

He watched God answer with fire.

The people fell on their faces and declared:

“The LORD, he is the God.”

If Elijah's story ended there, we would probably describe him as fearless.

But Scripture lets us see what happens next.

Jezebel threatens his life.

Elijah runs.

Eventually he goes into the wilderness, sits beneath a broom tree, and says:

“It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life.”

This isn't a weak man.

This is an exhausted man.

And there is a difference.

Sometimes we assume that because God has carried us through something difficult, we shouldn't feel the effects of what we just went through.

But victory can exhaust you too.

You can survive the deployment and struggle afterward.

You can get the business through the crisis and collapse afterward.

You can hold the family together through an emergency and only later realize what it took out of you.

You can take care of everybody else so long that eventually you realize nobody—including you—has been taking care of you.

Elijah had been fighting.

Now he was tired.

Discussion

What are you carrying right now that is taking more out of you than you have admitted?

Why do men often have difficulty admitting that they are exhausted?

2. EXHAUSTION CAN CHANGE THE WAY YOU SEE EVERYTHING

Elijah says:

“It is enough.”

Then:

“I am not better than my fathers.”

Later, Elijah tells God:

“I, even I only, am left.”

But Elijah isn't the only one left.

God eventually tells him there are 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed to Baal.

Elijah's feelings were real.

His fear was real.

His exhaustion was real.

But some of the conclusions he was drawing from them were not true.
That's something men need to understand.
When you become exhausted enough, what you feel can begin masquerading as what is true.
You start telling yourself:
I'm failing.
Nobody understands.
Nothing is going to change.
Everybody depends on me.
I can't keep doing this.
I've screwed too much up.
I'm alone.
My family would be better without me.
Those thoughts are dangerous when a man sits alone with them long enough.
The enemy doesn't necessarily need to destroy a man in one dramatic moment.
Sometimes he only needs to convince an exhausted man to isolate himself and keep listening to his own darkest thoughts.

3. ELIJAH WANTED TO DIE

We shouldn't soften this part of the story.
Elijah asks God to take his life.
A prophet of God.
A man who had witnessed miracles.
A man who had just watched fire fall from heaven.
A man who knew God was real.
And still:
"It is enough."
There are men who know exactly what that sentence feels like.
Sometimes exhaustion moves beyond:
I need a break.
And becomes:
I don't want to do this anymore.
Sometimes even:
I don't want to be here anymore.
If you ever reach that place, do not carry it alone.
Tell somebody.
Your wife.
A brother.
Your pastor.
A counselor.

A trusted friend.

Someone.

There is no strength in silently allowing destructive thoughts to consume you.

Sometimes strength is saying:

“Brother, I'm not doing good.”

Elijah wanted his story to end in verse 4.

God knew there were more chapters.

Elijah couldn't see them yet.

He couldn't see Elisha.

He couldn't see the work still ahead of him.

He couldn't see the men God had preserved.

He couldn't see how God would eventually take him home.

All Elijah could see at that moment was the broom tree.

Never assume that what you can see from underneath your broom tree is the whole story.

4. LOOK AT HOW GOD RESPONDS

Read 1 Kings 19:5–8.

This may be one of the most important parts of the entire passage.

God does not shame Elijah.

God doesn't say:

“After everything I've shown you, how can you possibly feel this way?”

He doesn't question Elijah's faith.

He doesn't question his courage.

He doesn't tell him to toughen up.

God lets him sleep.

Then an angel wakes him.

There is food.

There is water.

Elijah eats.

Then he sleeps again.

The angel comes back.

“Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.”

Think about that sentence.

God acknowledges something Elijah desperately needs to understand:

The journey is too much for Elijah in his current condition.

God doesn't remove the journey.

He strengthens the man who must walk it.

There are times when the most spiritual thing a man can do may be remarkably simple.

Sleep.
Eat.
Turn the phone off.
Spend time with his family.
Sit quietly.
Pray.
Talk to somebody.
Take a day away.
Let somebody else carry something.
We aren't machines.
God designed human beings with limitations.
Pretending those limitations don't exist isn't strength.

5. GOD MEETS ELIJAH IN THE QUIET

Read 1 Kings 19:9–13.
Elijah reaches Horeb.
There is a powerful wind.
Then an earthquake.
Then fire.
But Scripture repeatedly tells us the Lord wasn't in those things.
Then comes:
“a still small voice.”
And Elijah listens.
There is something here for men who live constantly surrounded by noise.
Work.
Phones.
News.
Customers.
Children.
Deadlines.
Problems.
Messages.
Responsibilities.
Something always needs attention.
Sometimes we become so accustomed to noise that silence becomes uncomfortable.
But eventually we need enough quiet to hear God.
God doesn't merely restore Elijah physically.
He restores his perspective.

He reminds Elijah that Elijah isn't God.
He reminds him that he isn't alone.
And He reminds him that there is still work to do.

6. RESTORATION IS NOT ABANDONING YOUR POST

This is important.
God doesn't restore Elijah so Elijah can spend the rest of his life underneath the broom tree.
Eventually God tells him to get up and go.
There are still responsibilities.
There is still a mission.
There are still people who need him.
There is still work God has prepared for him.
But God restores the man before sending him back into the work.
That's the difference between restoration and escape.
Escape says:
"I don't want responsibility anymore."
Restoration says:
"I need God to strengthen me so I can faithfully carry the responsibilities He has actually given me."
Biblical rest isn't abandoning your post.
It's allowing God to restore you so you can return to it.
And that leads directly into our next session:
Stand Your Post.
But before we talk about standing our post, we need to make sure the man standing there isn't quietly collapsing.

7. YOU WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO DO THIS ALONE

One of Elijah's repeated complaints is:
"I, even I only, am left."
God corrects him.
There are still 7,000.
And soon Elisha enters Elijah's life.
Isolation tells us:
Nobody understands.
Nobody can help.
I don't want to burden anybody.
I'll deal with it myself.
Those thoughts sound strong.
Usually they aren't.
God repeatedly builds relationships into the lives of His people.

Moses had Aaron.
David had Jonathan.
Paul had Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and others.
Elijah would have Elisha.
Jesus Himself sent disciples out two by two.
Men need other men.
Not fifty acquaintances.
Not 2,000 Facebook friends.
A few men who have permission to ask:
“How are you really doing?”
And who won't accept “fine” when they know it isn't true.

DISCUSSION

Take some time with these. Don't rush through them.

1. What responsibility are you carrying right now that is taking more out of you than you're admitting?
2. When you become exhausted, what usually changes first?
Your patience? Marriage? Temper? Prayer life? Decision-making? Motivation? Drinking? Eating? Sleep? Isolation?
3. Why do men sometimes treat admitting exhaustion as weakness?
4. Elijah isolated himself. What makes isolation attractive when we're worn down?
5. What's the difference between abandoning your responsibilities and admitting you need restoration?
6. Have you ever experienced a time when exhaustion made your circumstances look worse or more hopeless than they actually were?
7. Who knows when you're actually struggling—not the cleaned-up version, but the truth?

And perhaps the most important question:

When you are at your lowest, who has permission to know?

If the answer is nobody, why?

Finally:

If you continue carrying your current load exactly the way you're carrying it today, where will you be six months from now?

SCRIPTURE TO CARRY THIS WEEK

Isaiah 40:28–31

God does not tell us that strong people never become exhausted.

Scripture says:

“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”

Then comes the promise:

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”

The source of our strength matters.

Matthew 11:28

Jesus says:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Notice what Jesus doesn't say.

He doesn't say:

Figure it out.

Try harder.

Man up.

Carry a little more.

He says:

Come to Me.

Psalm 23:3

"He restoreth my soul."

The Shepherd who leads us into difficult places is also the Shepherd who makes us lie down.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE — PUT THE LOAD DOWN

This week, identify one burden you have been carrying as though everything depends on you.

Name it.

Don't give it a vague name like "stress."

Be specific.

My marriage.

My business.

My finances.

My children.

My health.

My future.

My past.

My anger.

My failure.

My fear.

Whatever it is.

For the next seven mornings, before you pick up your phone and begin dealing with everybody else's problems, give God five minutes.

Tell Him exactly what you're carrying.

Pray something like:

"God, this is what I'm carrying. I'm responsible for what You've given me to do, but I am not God. Show me what belongs to me today and what I need to leave with You."

Then do one concrete thing this week that allows restoration.

Get some sleep.

Spend uninterrupted time with your wife or children.

Turn your phone off.
Sit somewhere quiet with Scripture.
Ask another man for help.
Tell somebody what you've actually been carrying.
Say no to something you don't need to carry.
Take the rest God is offering you.
Not escape.
Restoration.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Holding the line doesn't mean pretending you're never tired.
It doesn't mean silently bleeding while everybody around you thinks you're fine.
And it doesn't mean carrying every burden by yourself until something finally breaks.
Sometimes holding the line means recognizing:
I'm tired.
I'm carrying too much.
I need God.
And I need my brothers.
Elijah sat underneath a broom tree believing his story should end.
God gave him food.
God gave him water.
God gave him rest.
God spoke to him.
God reminded him he wasn't alone.
And then God gave him somewhere to go.
The broom tree wasn't the end of Elijah's story.
It was where God began restoring him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father,
Some of us are tired.
Maybe more tired than we've admitted to our families, our friends, ourselves, or even to You.
We've carried responsibilities because they needed carrying. We've tried to be strong because people depend on us. We've kept moving because stopping didn't seem like an option.
But You know what we're carrying.
You know the things we talk about and the things we don't.
You know the disappointments, failures, fears, anger, pressure, and exhaustion we hide behind "I'm fine."
Father, meet us where You met Elijah.
When we're exhausted, give us rest.

When our thinking becomes dark, remind us what is true.

When we isolate ourselves, put brothers around us.

When we believe we're alone, remind us that we aren't.

When the journey is too great for us, give us the strength required for the next step.

Teach us the difference between running away from our responsibilities and allowing You to restore us so we can return to them.

Give us the courage to speak when we're struggling and the wisdom to listen when another man finally tells us that he is.

Most importantly, remind us that our strength has never come solely from ourselves.

You are our strength.

You are our refuge.

You restore our souls.

And when we're ready, You put us back on our feet.

Help us hold the line—not through pride, not alone, and not in our own strength, but through You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT SESSION

Session 2 — Stand Your Post

God restores us for a reason. The next question is whether we will remain faithful where He has placed us.