

Deepening The Walk

Faith Hopes

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

The other day my daughters asked if they could take a bath together. This was something I usually didn't allow, because the scenario ends up with a fight and, of course, the bathroom gets a bath at the same time. However, this day I gave in because they needed some good sister time together. About midway through the bath they called out to me, "Mom, can we wash each other's hair." To which I replied, "Yes, but make sure you put a little shampoo in your hand and don't use the whole bottle." So in a bit I decided to check on the shampoo treatments. To my surprise I encountered two little girls with clumps of white soap speckled all throughout their hair. I was quickly given the explanation that they couldn't find the shampoo and used the bar of soap instead. As I glanced to see that the shampoo was just a quarter of a head turn away from the bar of soap, I let out a big sigh. Grabbing the shower head, I began to rinse out clumps and specks of soap. I don't know if you ever had this task before, but it isn't an easy one. A few minutes into the tedious task I exclaimed, "This is going to take forever." My four year old looked at me and replied, "So Mommy does that mean we are going to spend the rest of our lives in this bathtub." I smiled and thought to myself that even though my comment was just an expression, she had a better perspective on longevity of problems than her mother.

Sometimes our troubles seem to go on for so long that we think they will never end. In the beginning, we are filled with hope in our Savior. However, as trials continue we begin to lose sight of that hope and begin to feel like there is no hope for an end. However, as my daughter pointed out in her four year old way, there is an end. Sometimes that end is reached here on earth and sometimes the end is when we exit this earth. But still our Savior does come to save us and we must remember that He may tarry for a reason. Meanwhile, we should learn how to act on our hope to keep it alive.

Elijah's experience with the widow and her son who died can teach us a lot about how to act on our hope. Let's look at the story and see how Elijah reacted.

Begin by reading 1 Kings 17:8-24

Initial encounter with the feeling of hopelessness:

What reaction did the widow woman have toward Elijah when her son died? (1 Kings 17:18)

Do you feel that she was angry with Elijah or with God? Why?

When we initially encounter something that gives us the realization that we have lost all hope (death of loved one for example), we begin a realm of emotions. Those who have studied the grief process report that we go through five stages of grief when we lose a loved one: shock, denial, anger, depression and acceptance. The widow woman probably immediately jumped to anger because her son had been sick for a while and she probably had realized early on that death could be the end. When we first realize that we may have lost hope in our lives for a particular

situation, we begin the same process as a grieving person does for a loved one. What we must do is realize early on that the stages are healthy for us, however, we must not let our hope die in the process of going through the stages. Elijah's actions are a good example of how to keep the hope alive.

Elijah's display of hope:

Read 1 King 17: 19-21 and write down your observations of Elijah's reaction after the widow had addressed him about her son's death.

Elijah did five things as a reaction to the initial news of hopelessness. They were:

1. He stayed calm.
2. He sought privacy
3. He prayed
4. He worked
5. He gave God the glory

Let's take a look at each of these to see how we can keep hope alive in situations we feel are becoming hopeless.

Elijah stayed calm.

Write down the words that Elijah said to the widow woman after she had finished her accusations toward him. (1 King 17:19)

Honestly, if this lady had come to me spewing off these bitter accusations I would have probably retaliated by spewing bitterness right back at her. However, Elijah responded with self-control – a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23) that many of us struggle with yielding to on a regular basis. However, when we lose control – when we lash out, hit, have an anxiety attack, etc. – we are not bringing glory to God. When we keep calm in the midst of the storm, we honor Christ. Read and write down your observations about the following verses in regards to self-control.

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 16:32

1 Timothy 3:1-2, 11

1 Peter 1:13

2 Peter 1:6

Elijah sought privacy.

Review Elijah's actions in 1 Kings 17:19.

Even though Elijah was going to pray for a miracle, he was not going to do it in front of the widow. He sought privacy.

Read Matthew 6:6. What does Jesus say about this?

Review the story of Jairus and Jesus raising his daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37-43). Did Jesus allow a crowd to see this miracle?

Jesus didn't exploit people or call attention to Himself and neither did Elijah. We shouldn't be too quick to broadcast our great deeds in advance. When we do them quietly and allow God to get the credit, we personally build upon our hope in Christ and don't get wrapped up in the sins that come from broadcasting them.

Elijah prayed.

Review Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 17:20-21.

Elijah was honest in his prayer. He didn't understand why the Lord allowed the boy to die and honestly expressed this in his prayer to the Lord. We should always be honest in our prayers to God. Even though He already knows how you feel, He wants you to express your feelings to Him. This opens up the line of communication and allows for honest feelings to be examined by you before the Lord.

Elijah was persistent with his prayer. Three times Elijah cried out to the Lord. Review the following verses and write down what they say about not giving up in prayer.

Luke 18:1-8:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

Elijah expressed a prayer of hope: He prayed for God to do something that up to this point in history there was no account of this ever being done and that was to raise someone from the dead. Elijah had never seen anyone come back to life, but he believed God could do the impossible. He placed his hope in a Lord who in his past had stopped the rain, fed him by ravens, and replenished the widow's flour and oil. He knew that a God who did all those things could raise the dead.

Review what Jesus had to say about praying with faith in Matthew 21:21-22.

God wants us to pray for big things. When we do we must place our hope in Him; recall the things He has done for us in the past; and have faith that He will move mountains.

Elijah worked.

Review Elijah's actions in 1 Kings 17:21.

Elijah's action of stretching himself over the boy's body three times was in an effort to revive the boy. When we have trials that we feel are hopeless, we must be in prayer to our Lord, but also at the same time, we must take action to work as the Lord directs.

According to James 2:17-19, how should our faith be shown?

When we act upon our faith, then we are acting on the hope of the Lord strengthening us and pulling us through the trial of our lives.

Elijah gave God the glory.

Review 1 Kings 17:22-24. What does the widow's response to Elijah about her son being alive show us about Elijah's character and conduct?

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus tells us to "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." When you allow God to work through you, even during the tough times of your life, you will inspire others to seek God also. In this way, you will be letting your light shine and bring God the glory.

Final Reflections: Satan wants us to think that the rough times we are having here on earth have no end. However, the Scriptures constantly point us to keep on believing and have hope in our God, Who loves us and wants the best for us. Sometimes we get wrapped up in our woes and we forget we serve a God who wants to bless us abundantly. We begin to tell ourselves "this is my cross to bear." But we should remember that we serve a redeeming God. A God Who sent Jesus to give us a life full of abundance (John 10:10). Sometimes He may tarry in giving us an answer of yes to redemption from our woes because He is teaching us valuable lessons in making right choices that give us the life of abundance here on earth. Sometimes we have learned the lessons but the consequences from our past choices are still there and must be lived through. Whatever the reason, we know that we serve a loving God and He wants the best for us. Therefore, we must continue to have hope by doing as Paul stated he did in Philippians 3:12-16. Press forward toward the goal and remember to hold on to the progress we have already made in Christ. No the cross isn't ours to bear. Christ suffered on it already. We must remember to place our troubles at His feet, leave them there, and take away the lessons He has for us to learn. For **He is** our only hope.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: Are you in the midst of a long road of woes? If so, think over the ways you have been displaying your hope in Christ to pull you through. Then think about the five ways Elijah displayed his hope. Ask the Lord to help you in keeping your hope alive by following the steps Elijah took – stay calm, seek privacy, pray, work, and give God the glory. When you have made it through this trial, then your faith will be strengthened because you have kept your hope alive.