



**The Nourishing Vocation Project
Near and Now:
*Discernment as a Way of Life: Elijah***

Warm-up Question

Why do we pretend we're okay when that's clearly not the case?



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Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

An angel touched him and said to him, ‘Get up and eat.’

Read [1 Kings 19:1-10](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Content Warning: suicidal ideation

NOTE: If you or someone you know are struggling with suicidal ideation, please contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or visit the [National Institute of Mental Health’s](#) website for additional resources and information.

When I read through this story about the prophet Elijah, I’m reminded of the saying, “It’s okay to not be okay.” Meant as an encouragement, the phrase suggests we don’t have to keep pretending everything is perfect in our lives when it’s not; we don’t have to plaster on a mask of perpetual happiness when we feel like an emotional disaster. Instead, we can and should acknowledge our struggles, difficulties, etc. because doing so is not indicative of some failing on our part.

Coming on the heels of a big success (see [1 Kings 18](#) for that story), Elijah finds himself threatened by Queen Jezebel and on the run for his life. As he runs, we get a deeper picture of his mental and emotional state, and it’s not good. Even after experiencing success, Elijah is in a place of fear, exhaustion, and deep despair, so much so that he actually prays for God to let him die ([v. 4](#)). Elijah doesn’t slap on a happy face and pretend he’s not struggling. Instead, he bluntly and boldly tells God about his struggles and emotions ([v. 10](#)).

God doesn’t respond to Elijah by ignoring his pleas. In the face of Elijah’s exhaustion, God provides exactly what he needs: food and rest. God doesn’t chastise Elijah for running or any other perceived shortcomings. Instead, God listens to his needs and goes on to make his presence known to Elijah in a powerful way (see [verses 11-18](#)). Our darkest moments are not the places where God abandons us. Instead, they are the very places where God can and *will* draw near with what’s needed: grace, rest, and Godself.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it hard to admit to and ask for what we need?
2. How can we do a better job of cultivating vulnerability and honesty in our relationships?
3. What helps you when you are having a hard time?
4. Share about a time when you were struggling. What helped you get through it?
5. How can despair impact your discernment and understanding of your vocations?
6. In what ways do you identify with Elijah?
7. How would Elijah tell his story?
8. What does it mean for you that God provides what we need in times of struggle?
9. How can you be the presence of God for others when they are struggling?



Activity Suggestions

God often uses the words and experiences of others to help us in our times of struggles. Take time to read the Langston Hughes poem, "[Mother to Son.](#)" What insight does the poem provide as to why we should keep going?

This week, write a letter of encouragement to one or two (1-2) people you may know who are struggling.

Create a list of the things (books, scripture verses, songs, activities, organizations, etc.) that have helped you in hard times. If you are using this resource as a group, generate this list as a group. This list can become a shareable resource as needed.

Prayer Concerns

Those who are struggling in fulfilling their multiple vocations, those who need rest and renewal, those who are struggling with thoughts of suicide.

Closing Prayer

When I am exhausted and overwhelmed, O God, meet me in my need and sustain me with your gifts of grace. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

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Mother to Son

by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
 It's had tacks in it,
 And splinters,
 And boards torn up,
 And places with no carpet on the floor—
 Bare.
 But all the time
 I've been a-climbin' on,
 And reachin' landin's,
 And turnin' corners,
 And sometimes goin' in the dark
 Where there ain't been no light.
 So boy, don't you turn back.
 Don't you set down on the steps
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
 Don't you fall now—
 For I've still goin', honey,
 I've still climbin',
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

