

LESS THAN PERFECT

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife and best friend, a companion who has loved me and stood by me when things were difficult. To my seven children, who often understood that Daddy was not perfect, but his love for them was vast and deep: I would not trade any of you for all the riches in the world. I pray this book helps you throughout life to remember you will never be perfect. Don't allow others to judge you and define your faith – that is left up to God. To my future grandchildren: May your lives be blessed by knowing God and His son, Jesus Christ, for both have been so very, very good to me. To my sisters, who have challenged and defended me, I am very grateful to you both. To my brother-in-law, who is the most empathetic and Christlike person I know: Were it not for your love and compassion, I would still be in the muck and mire. To my dad, who taught me to love the Old Testament, who helped me see the imperfections in God's

leaders and how God still called them and loved them. To my grandmother, who helped me develop a critical mind and always search with a question. To other family members and friends not specifically mentioned, I pray you are secure in our relationship and know how much you have truly meant to me. Finally, to my mother on your eighty eighth birthday, you never stopped telling me how special I am, how I was your Mother's Day gift, the son you prayed for when all seemed hopeless in your marriage. To all of you, I am forever grateful and thankful God put you in my life. I will love you eternally!

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt overwhelmed, that God would never accept you? Felt like following God would not work because there are just too many things wrong, and you could never be perfect or measure up? Felt like your sins were far too great for God to ever forgive? Felt judged or looked down upon by others claiming to know God? Maybe you're the person who started following God but then strayed from the path. You found yourself deeper in sin than ever before. People around you questioned whether you ever truly committed in the first place, certain the Holy Spirit did not live in you. Has your soul ever been burdened and overwhelmed with doubt? Doubt about your calling? Doubt of your ability to follow God? Doubt about those around you and their commitment to God? Doubt about God's love for you? If you have felt any of these doubts or even come close to asking these questions, then this book is for you.

How would you feel if I told you that some of the most powerful men and women of God were also some of the most sinful? Some of the most doubtful? Murderers, adulterers, liars, thieves, drunkards, arrogant, prideful, racist, lustful, rageful, fearful and lacking in faith? Would that cause you to garner strength, struggle with your faith or just get angry with me for saying such a thing? The truth lies in the word of God which lays bare all the awesome qualities of these men and women but also reflects their significant failures. Abraham was the father of faith but also doubted and lied on occasions due to fear and lack of faith. Moses murdered a man in anger and fled to avoid consequences. David who inspired a nation with his faith, also plotted, schemed and had a man murdered to cover up his adultery. Elijah, very powerful in faith also begged God to take his life out of fear and lack of faith. Noah, whose family God chose to save from the flood, planted a vineyard and got drunk shortly thereafter. Jonah was a racist, Jacob a liar and deceiver. King Solomon was the wisest and richest man that ever lived but was controlled by lust and desire. Samson, the strongest man to ever live was also controlled by lust and desire. Joseph was spoiled, arrogant and prideful to the point his brothers wanted to kill him. Joshua and Gideon lacked courage. Tamar and Rahsaan were prostitutes. Peter walked on water but was also told to “*get behind me Satan*” (*Matthew 16:23 NIV*). The apostles John and James were ambitious and wanted to be powerful. Paul was a murderer and persecutor of Jesus. The Corinthians and other early churches had many sins that were committed after they committed their lives to God. The list goes on and on.

Does seeing the sin of the Biblical figures cause you to stumble, rock your faith or something else? For me, I gain strength knowing

that there is real hope for my life because I am terribly imperfect. If God can use people like these throughout history than surely that gives me hope! Surely that brightens my day! I no longer have to live in doubt that God can work with me just as I am because as long as I am willing, he is willing. For the scriptures say, “*the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do*” (Roman 4:17 NET). Did you catch that? God is calling you; he is summoning you, not for what you think you are, but for what he truly sees in you, for what he believes in you. Gideon is such a great example of this in the Bible. He was hiding out like a coward, but God called him, “*mighty warrior*” (Judges 6:12 NIV). Obviously, Gideon did not think of himself as a mighty warrior, but God did. He called him out to be what he knew he could be, and the rest is history. Israel routed the Midianites, and they were free again to live peacefully with their God. Are you hiding from God? Do you believe what God is whispering in your ear that you can be? Arise, mighty warrior! For the scriptures say, “*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*” (Hebrews 3:17 NIV). If you hear him calling, do not harden your heart from unbelief. Turn to God and be healed.

This book is written for all who have struggled, all who have doubted, all who have questioned themselves and for all who have been persecuted for their failures and questioned by others. There is hope for you, if you want hope! There is life for you, if you want life! I encourage you to join me as we dive into the scriptures and reflect on the lives of many powerful, yet very imperfect men and women of God. I encourage you to take a harder look at them than maybe you have ever done before. If you do so, like me and many others, you will come away with a renewed belief, yes, I may be far

from perfect, yes, I may have sinned greatly, yes, I may have lost all hope, but God is not finished with me yet!

ABRAHAM

FATHER OF FAITH

Let's start out by looking at probably one of the greatest men of faith in the Bible, Abraham. Abraham is known by many as the "*father of faith*." The Jewish and Arab nations stemmed from him. The line of Judah which ultimately led to Christ stemmed from him. He is the father of many and viewed by many as having great faith. Rightly so, after all, he did offer his son Isaac to God as a sacrifice not knowing God would prevent that from happening. Would I offer my son or daughter as a sacrifice? I would think not in a thousand years, however, Abraham did not waiver or second guess. That in my book makes him the greatest man of faith alone. Maybe it does for you as well. Whatever the reason, he is widely known as the "*father of faith*."

Was Abraham born this way or was he conditioned over time? Did he ever waver in his faith or was he just solid as a rock, strong as an oak from the start? Did God pick Abraham because he saw his great faith or was there something about Abraham that was different? Something God saw that would develop into great faith? The scriptures say, "*the Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God*" (*Psalms 14:2 NIV*). The scriptures also say, "*For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him*" (*2 Chronicles 16:9 NIV*). Therefore, if we go by the scriptures, which is never a bad thing, we can conclude that maybe, just maybe, God was searching for someone like Abraham to carry the torch so to speak. He was looking for someone he could use to establish his covenant with. Someone faithful whose offspring would ultimately lead to salvation for all, Jesus Christ.

Before we can dive into some of Abraham's not so great qualities, we first should establish why he was such a great man. The scriptures say, "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (*Romans 10:17 NKJV*). So, to have faith in God we must first hear God. Abraham's story starts out in Genesis Chapter 12 when God said, "*Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*" (*Gen 12:1-3 NIV*). The next verse talks about how he did not hesitate nor question God but just went. Not only taking himself, his wife and his household, but also his nephew Lot and his household. He was 75 years old. Let me say that

again, Abraham was 75 years old. So right from the start we get a picture of perhaps why God picked Abraham. He believed, didn't question, and influenced those around him. He did not say, "*Come on God, can't you get someone a little younger, after all, I am 75 and looking forward to a nice retirement?*" Nope, didn't say that, but I can sure understand why he might have been tempted. I just turned 60 myself and things are a little more difficult than when I was younger. Don't walk as fast, can't run, bones hurt, body aches and my eyes now require glasses to read. Oh well, such is life, but that was not Abraham's excuse.

So, in the preceding paragraph we established that Abraham was probably selected because God knew he could work with him. Maybe God watched him for many years before finally deciding, "*Yep, that's my man*" or maybe God was watching him and waiting for Abraham's desire for "*real meaning*" to overcome the desire for "*just life.*" Whatever the reason, Abraham was called at age 75. Not too early and not too late. As Goldilocks would say, "*just right.*"

Abraham was considered a righteous man because of his faith. The scriptures say, "*Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness*" (Gen 15:6 NIV). Later, in the New Testament the scriptures say, "*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed-a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The Righteous will live by faith*" (Romans 1:17 NIV). Further along the scriptures say, "*However, to the one who does not work but trust God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness*" (Romans 4:5 NIV). We can go on and on about faith and righteousness, but I will leave that for you to study yourself. God credited Abraham with righteousness because of

his great faith. With faith he left his home country and traveled a very long way on foot with all his family and possessions. From faith, Abraham took off to rescue his nephew Lot (*Genesis 14*) who had been captured during war time by four kings. He attacked the four kings with 318 trained men. I don't know about you, but I believe it took some big faith to attack four kings with such a small force. In Genesis Chapter 18, Abraham showed that he had enough faith to directly challenge the Lord not once, not twice, but six times. Finally, in Chapter 22 of Genesis we see the climax of Abraham's life and just how faithful he was. *God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love-Isaac- and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you" (Gen 22:2 NIV).* In the verses that follow we see his remarkable obedience and amazing faith. He never questioned God but always had faith. In *Hebrews 11:17-19 NIV* it says, *"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead."* Wow! Talk about some great faith! I have never heard of greater faith from a person. Have you? That is why Abraham is rightly known as the *"father of faith."*

OK, now that we have looked at several passages of scriptures and established that Abraham was just an awesome dude with great faith, we might come away a little intimidated. No, really? You think? Yep, I agree, Abraham's faith is extremely rare and yes, intimidating. So where does that leave me, or you? In the dark and intimidated? Well, maybe so, until we take a deeper look at the

other aspects of Abraham's life which show he was also human and made some big mistakes.

Did you know that Abraham told a couple of doozies? That he was self-focused and intentionally lied to others resulting in many people suffering because of his lie? Therefore, could you call Abraham a selfish liar or perhaps just cowardly and afraid? Does that offend you to call such a Godly man those things? Well, if God did not want us to see that part of Abraham, then he would not have put it in the Bible. In Genesis Chapter 12, just a few verses after Abraham was promised by God to be protected, blessed, and become a great nation, we come across his first sign of being human. Abraham left his land due to famine and went to live in Egypt. Upon entering he asked his wife Sarah to lie. *"Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you"* (Gen 12:13 NIV). Wow, did you catch that? Talk about throwing your wife under the bus. He might as well have said, *"Honey, you know that I am afraid, and my life is more important than yours, therefore, let's tell these people a lie. We will let them take you so that "I" will be treated well, and "My" life will be spared. They might want to sleep with you but that's ok. It will all work out for the best. Just remember you are doing this for me."* Well husbands and future husbands, how does that make you feel? Would you hand over your wife to be forced to have sex with men she did not know nor want to know just so you could be spared and prosper? Not me! It would be time to bring out an old saying, *"over my cold dead body."* Of course, it is easy to talk tough when not faced with the circumstances, however, in that moment I would hope to be brave and defend my wife. Prayerfully that day will never happen to me or you, but it did happen to Abraham.

Therefore, he chose to lie and put himself before his wife. Why? Perhaps he was not being selfish but was just afraid! That would mean Abraham lacked faith and was simply afraid. Sarah was very beautiful, and he feared the Egyptians would covet her and kill him. As a result of his fear and lie, the house of Pharaoh suffered greatly and was afflicted with serious diseases because Sarah had been taken.

In Genesis chapter 20, many years later, we see Abraham repeat the same lie. This time, as a result, King Abimelek is threatened to be killed by God. God only spares the king's life because the king pleaded with him regarding his innocence. The lie also affected the king's wife and females in his household. They all became cursed and were not able to conceive children. In Gen 20: 9-11 NIV, the king confronted Abraham and asked why he had done this terrible thing to them, Abraham unapologetically replied in v. 11 it was because he felt, *"there is surely no fear of God in this place."* Well, maybe all of that was 100% true but still, they had not wronged him, and Abraham was carrying the promise of God's protection. So, at this moment, fear, self-focus, and lack of faith once again controlled Abraham.

In Genesis Chapter 15 we see where God promised Abraham a son. Now let's pause for a moment at this promise. If you were married and God promised you a son, what would you think? Most of us would think the son would be from our wife and no one else. Not the house cleaner, the girl next door or a surrogate. Well Abraham only had one wife, so the promise must have been he would have a son from Sarah, right? Well, maybe Abraham struggled a little bit because when his wife hears the story of the promise (scriptures don't specifically say that he told her, but most

husbands do share these types of things with their wife, I know I do), she immediately offers her slave Hagar. Now at this point Abraham could have stepped up and said, "*No Sarah, I believe the son God promised will come from you, not Hagar.*" He could have, but he did not. So, the expression, could of, should of, would of is at play here. Abraham's life was at a crossroads. He wanted to believe God but instead rationalized and gave into worldly thinking. So, the "*father of faith*" had a moment of weakness and was lacking in faith. Unfortunately, giving in and taking the wrong path resulted in many, many repercussions to this day. Did you know that the Arab nations are direct descendants of Abraham? That they also call him father? That is because they descended from the slave woman Hagar who gave birth to Ishmael. What if Abraham had stood his ground and not gave in to that moment of doubt and earthly reason? What would the result have been? Would there be peace in the Middle East today? A very good question. We will never know the answer.

In conclusion, let's address the humanness of Abraham and then see how we might draw some strength from it. At times Abraham was self-focused, afraid, doubted God's promise, and lied to save his own skin and get rewarded. When you put it like that, he does not seem too far away from any of us, does he? Have you ever deceived others not concerned about how it might affect them? Have you ever lied out of fear, selfishness or to get ahead? Have you ever doubted the promises of God and relied on what the world around you was saying? If so, take heart, you are not alone and you are in good company. After all, Abraham did those things, but he was still sought after by God. Sought after so much that God established his covenant with him. The covenant that

would ultimately lead to Jesus Christ. You see, being perfect is not the requirement. The requirement is that you believe God and have faith so it can be credited to you as righteousness.

ELIJAH

PROPHET OF FAITH

The story of Elijah is one of my favorites. He was such a powerful, bold prophet of faith that I almost named this chapter, “*Elijah, Prophet of Fire.*” If a person could chew up iron and spit out nails it was Elijah. He called down fire from heaven on three occasions killing the enemies of God. Elijah also never saw death. Yes, that is correct, Elijah never saw death but was taken into heaven in a chariot of fire. Elijah is so revered that the prophets predicted he would return before the coming of Jesus the Messiah. This prophecy was fulfilled through John the Baptist. Elijah also appeared on the mountain with Moses during the transfiguration of Jesus. Elijah’s name is invoked to this day in several Jewish customs. Get the picture? Elijah was a very important prophet! It seemed nothing ever fazed him, but then again, things are not

always what they seem. What would you say if I said that Elijah, although powerful in faith, once wallowed in fear and doubt begging God to take his life? One day he could be riding high at the top of the clouds only to be wallowing with self-doubt the next. Can you relate to that? Have you ever been on the top of your game, at the top of the mountain so to speak, only to find yourself depressed, hopeless and in despair the next day? Feeling like no matter what you did you would never overcome or amount to anything. If so, you are going to love Elijah just as I have come to love him. Let's dig in.

Elijah's story starts out in 1 Kings Chapter 17, or does it? Well, that is where his story picks up in the Bible, but obviously there was life before that. What kind of life do you think he had? Was he a loner? Did he have many friends? Was he married, had children? What were his parents like? Did he have siblings? How old was he before God started calling him to lead? Was he 30, 40, or even 50? The Bible doesn't really answer those types of questions, so we are left to wonder and ponder possibilities. It does answer his willingness to serve God and the power of his faith. What did God see in Elijah that eventually caused him to not see death? The scriptures say, *"suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind"* (2 Kings 2:11 NIV). There are only two men in the Old Testament that never saw death. Enoch and Elijah. What was it about those two men that God would say, *"I have seen enough, avoid death and just come be with me in heaven?"* Think about that for a moment. How many Godly people were there in the Old Testament that did die and did see death? Wow, how special those two must have been! The scriptures say, *"Enoch walked faithfully*

with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Gen 5:24 NIV). Talk about some powerful walking! As I study Elijah, I also see this type of powerful walking. Elijah was all about God and nothing else. My opinion is that God enjoyed spending time with Enoch and Elijah so much that he just couldn't wait to constantly fellowship with them anymore, so he took them home.

In 1 Kings 17, Elijah appears and speaks to Ahab King of Israel. *"As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word"* (1 Kings 17:1 NIV). Shortly after that statement to the king, God appeared to Elijah and said, *"Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there"* (1 Kings 17:3 NIV). Right out of the gate Elijah was bold, making bold statements to a king who could easily have him killed. Then faithfully relied on God's word that he would be taken care of by a group of ravens. Now growing up in the south, I have always thought of a raven as a crow, so naturally when reading this I was like, *"Dude, you had some killer faith and put your life in the hands of a bunch of crows for food."* It was not until recently that I found out the difference. A raven and crow are from the same family, but the raven is twice as big and has a thicker bill. Regardless, Elijah was going to be fed by a bunch of birds, and he believed it. In verse 6 it says, *"The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook"* (1 Kings 17:6 NIV). As I write this on Father's Day, my family is cooking a nice Texas brisket for celebration. Therefore, I must wonder if Elijah had some brisket brought to him. Of course, the Bible does not give specifics, but I would like to think he had

some quality choices of meat. After all, he took a huge step on faith. Would you do what he did? Challenge a nation's ruler and then retreat to some far away place for years to be fed by birds? That took lots of faith, but the story does not end there. Shortly after the brook dried up, God again asked Elijah to trust him. *"Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food"* (1 Kings 17: 9 NIV). Once again, Elijah did not hesitate but set off on another journey directed by God.

When Elijah arrives at the gate of Zarephath, there is a widow gathering wood. He asks her to bring him some water and a piece of bread. The scriptures say the widow replied, *"As surely as the Lord your God lives, I don't have any bread-only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die"* (1 Kings 17:12 NIV). I am not sure what you are thinking at this point, but I am thinking something like, *"This poor widow is at the end of her rope and Elijah is asking her to give everything to him and rely on God?"* Yes, that is exactly what Elijah is asking. Remember, he has already done much on faith, so why stop here, right? In the scriptures, his reply to the widow was, *"Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have"* then he further says, *"For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land'"* (1 Kings 17:13-14 NIV). So, the widow responds according to his instructions and there was food every day for Elijah, herself and her son. I have to wonder at this point what the widow must have been thinking. Perhaps

she thought, *“This dusty stranger is half crazy but, oh well, I was going to die anyway so why not take a chance. After all, he is very positive and sure of himself.”* Who knows what she was thinking but one thing I have learned in life to be true, if you are positive, driven, and full of faith, it is contagious to the people around you. Lucky for this woman she took him in, for it wasn’t long after that her son died, and Elijah raised him from the dead. Yes, that is correct, Elijah raised him from the dead! You can read about it in 1 Kings 17: 17-24. To paraphrase, the widow comes to Elijah upset because her son died, Elijah cries out to God in prayer, her son returns to life and the widow is full of faith and convinced he is a prophet speaking the truth of God. Wow, what powerful faith to raise someone from the dead! In the Bible there are ten occasions of this happening, three occur in the Old Testament and seven in the New Testament. One by Elijah, two by Elisha (*who asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit*), three directly by Jesus, two because of Jesus’s crucified death (saints in Jerusalem and Jesus himself) and two by his apostles. Regardless of the number, on each occasion it required very powerful faith! So, at this point, we have established that Elijah had powerful faith and would not shun to do anything God asked. He was a man’s man so to speak or a prophet’s prophet. Yet even as great a prophet as he was, even as great a Man of God as he was, he was very much human.

Chapter 18 and 19 of 1st Kings are two of my favorite chapters in the Old Testament. Elijah, full of faith in God, is called back to confront King Ahab. Now remember that King Ahab doesn’t like Elijah very much at this point and has been searching for years to kill him. Anyway, Elijah boldly confronts the King and tells him, *“Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on*

Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table" (1Kings 18:19 NIV). So, Ahab sent word throughout Israel and assembled the people and the prophets. Elijah confronts the people and challenges them *"How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him"* (1 Kings 18:21 NIV). The people are very quiet at this point and continue to listen. Elijah has a plan. He calls for two burnt offerings, one from Baal prophets and one from him. Two bulls are going to be offered. The Baal prophets will prepare their sacrifice and Elijah his. *"Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire-he is God"* (1Kings 18:24 NIV). So now the plan is unfolding as all the people think it is a good idea. No flip of a coin to see who goes first as Elijah graciously offers first dibs to the Baal prophets. So, it starts, the bull is prepared, and the Baal prophets start calling on the name of Baal from morning till noon. Shouting and dancing they kept calling out. Of course, Elijah, calm, cool, and collected, found humor in it, and starts to make fun of them. *"Shout louder! Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened"* (1 Kings 18:27 NIV). Of course you can imagine the effect this had on them. Like throwing gasoline on a fire, they became rabid dogs. Verses 28-29 say they shouted louder and louder, cut themselves with swords and spears, frantically prophesying all the time. So, around the time of the evening sacrifice, 3:00pm, you can imagine the Baal prophets are exhausted and humiliated. In steps Elijah. Ok gang, gather around. You guys help me repair the altar with twelve stones representing each tribe of Israel. We're going to dig

a trench around the altar, put some wood on it and then the bull. To take away all doubt, we're also going to fill up these four large jars with water and pour them over the altar three different times. At the time of the sacrifice, Elijah steps forward and prays to God, *"Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again. "Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord-he is God! The Lord-he is God" (1 Kings 18:36-39 NIV)! Now talk about a powerful event! All these wishy-washy people have been shown something very powerful, and it didn't require a bunch of yelling and cutting with swords and spears. Just a powerful prayer request offered once. Not twice, not three times but just once. It didn't take hours and hours until completely exhausted but just one request. The fire was immense and even burned up the stones. Have you ever seen a fire that hot? Not me. I have had many campfires, but the stones always remained. Get the picture? The people were flabbergasted and totally amazed. Elijah orders them to gather all the Baal prophets and put them to death. Wow, what a day of victory for the Lord, the people of Israel and Elijah! How does one even comprehend the magnitude of such a one-sided victory? How about a Super Bowl where one team scores 100 points and the other zero with no first downs? Even that cannot compare to this. Such a great, great day to be talked about for many centuries to come. Not only did he call fire from heaven and kill the prophets of Baal, but he*

also prayed and it started to rain again. A very thirsty land now received physical water and spiritual water all in the same day. At this point, Elijah is literally at the top of the mountain. The top of his game. Has any other prophet accomplished what he has? Turned the hearts and minds of the people in a matter of minutes? Has anyone held a candle to him at this point with such powerful faith? Simply amazing, nothing compares, wow upon wow and Elijah is now invincible! No one can stop him! Oh really? Despite all his great strengths, Elijah was still just a man. Powerful in faith, but still very human.

In Chapter 19 of 1st Kings, we start out with word quickly spreading about the huge success on Mount Carmel. Word gets back to Queen Jezebel who sends a messenger to threaten Elijah. *"May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them"* (1Kings 19:2 NIV). Whatever Jezzy, you can't threaten my Godly man like that. You are talking about Elijah, sweetness. He will eat you for breakfast and feed you to the wolves for dinner. Yea, wishful thinking on our part huh? The scriptures say Elijah responded this way, *"Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep"* (1Kings 19:3-5 NIV). WHAT??? Are you kidding me??? Not my man Elijah!! Surely not, my eyes must be playing tricks on me. Surely, I did not just read what I read! Get behind me Satan for no man of God would do that! Well, take a pause and read it again. Yes, he did actually

say all that. You see, I believe these scriptures are here to remind everyone that regardless of how strong you think you are, you can fall just as fast and just as hard as Elijah did. Wow! I mean this was like falling off a two-thousand-foot cliff. Was he actually afraid after being so very, very bold? Did he really just pray to God for death because he thought of himself as so worthless that he could never be used by God? Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever been in such a deep dark depression to the point you thought of taking your own life or prayed to God to take it for you? Have you ever felt utterly worthless to yourself, others and God? Well, take heart because you are not alone. You are in some very, very good company. Elijah calls to you from the scriptures.

As we continue to read on, we find that Elijah is so depressed that an Angel comes and cooks food for him two times. Then Elijah continues to flee into the desert for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. I really love this next verse, *“There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah” (1 Kings 19:9 NIV)?* Wow, what a great verse. God basically says to Elijah, *“Why are you here? What are you doing? Don’t you know I have your back? Don’t you remember I fed you in the desert with Ravens? Didn’t you see that powerful ball of fire come down from heaven? Come on Elijah! Why are you here?”* Elijah finally comes to his senses, wins more great victories for God, becomes so admired by Elisha that Elisha’s only wish is that he can be twice the man Elijah was. The story ends with Elijah being taken into heaven and avoiding death. You see, he was amazing, but we needed to see the other side as well. God wanted us to see it. Have you ever been so depressed that others had to take care of you? Have you ever

heard God's voice whisper softly to you, "*Why are you here?*" *My son died for you. You have great, great hope and a future. I will help you, just trust me and lean not on your own understanding.*" I know personally I've fallen into depression and listened to those dark thoughts of discouragement. Truth be told, everyone has. Another truth is, we don't have to stay there. Jesus is on your side. Elijah didn't stay there but bounced back powerfully! Therefore, keep these scriptures and this very true story close to your heart and remember it the next time life gets tough. You are in good company, and yes, you too can bounce back, just like Elijah.