

The Power of Renewal  
1 Kings 19:1-19  
A439a

**SLIDE 1 - TITLE**

I find words fascinating...do you?

They can convey such meaning in such simple terms

Some sound funny – for example, after church, we will all absquatulate

(A fancy way of saying leave the building)

Or, some are just funny – did you know that the opposite of disgruntled...

Is gruntled? Check it out – so next time mom prepares a great meal

You can tell her that really left you gruntled

Some are just odd – did you know that onomatopoeia means the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it (such as *buzz*, *hiss*)

Finally, did you know that in 2019 the most hated word in the English language?

Moist

On the other hand, some words can be deadly

For example – let me give you four words that will bring me to a complete halt

“We need to talk” – early in my pastoral career, I had some bad experiences

Predicated by those words – and it has stuck with me

So much so that a bit ago one of my board members left me a message

That simply said, “We need to talk” – and I was almost paralyzed

Until we could connect two days later and I found out

She wanted to compliment me on something – she knows now

Never to leave a message like that again!

Then...there’s Twitter – has ever a medium harnessed such potential

To do good, and to do bad all at the same time

People have been driven to suicide by mere tweets

I find it amusing, that after four years of an administration

That fairly governed by tweets – one senator criticized the current president

Saying, “Tweets from his account are limited and, when they come, unimaginably conventional...”(John Cornyn)

And that’s a bad thing!

And then...there's our text today, when a powerful man of God – the prophet Elijah  
Gets a 29 word tweet from a woman and it sends him running for his life  
In deep depression – what's going on here?

What we have in 1 Kings 18 & 19 is a veritable case study  
In pastoral ministry, burnout and restoration  
Much of my work – first in Pinnacle that agency I lead, and then in CGL  
Where I'm the Executive Director of Church Strengthening  
Involves helping and encouraging pastors  
I've been invited here to help "launch" Pastor Mark's sabbatical  
And I love to do that and jump at the chance – because I want to say to you  
Thank you – and to tell you that giving your pastor a sabbatical  
Is just about the best thing you can do...for yourself!  
And we see that in our text this morning

## **SLIDE 2 – THREE YEARS**

Many of us remember 1 Kings 18 from our Sunday School days – if not  
Go home and read it this afternoon – it is an amazing story  
King Ahab was on the throne – the 7<sup>th</sup> King of Israel – son of Omri  
With a reign that would last 22 year – and while he did some good things  
He did some things very badly – he wanted to blend the worship of Baal  
And the local gods with the worship of Jehovah – his wife, Jezebel  
A Phoenician – simply want God's representatives killed

He used his political power for personal gain – he had a fellow  
Named Naboth killed so he could take his property  
Sort of a Jordan-gate situation

And, he practiced the politics of compromise, forming alliances  
With enemies such as King Benhadad of Syria – against God's commands

Corrupt politics, corrupt morals, civil unrest and religious confusion  
Sounds a bit like the picture you might see on CNN or Fox News today  
And into that mess steps Elijah, a prophet of God

God brought judgement to Israel in the form of a drought that lasted three years

### SLIDE 3 – ELIJAH IN ACTION

In 1 Kings 18 you find Elijah confronting the king, 450 prophets of Baal  
And 400 prophets of the Asherah to a contest – the text says:

*So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. "Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."*

The story continues – how the other prophets dances around the fire  
From morning till noon – shouting and cutting themselves  
Until Elijah couldn't take it anymore and called out – "Shout louder (27)  
He's a god – maybe he's visiting the God down the street  
He might be in the bathroom" – drove them into a frenzy

Until the day had passed, and the time of the evening sacrifice had come  
And Elijah said (30) – come near to me – and you have a great example  
Of the role of a pastor

### SLIDE 4 – PASTORS CALL PEOPLE

-First, he repaired the alter of the Lord (30) – folks the altar of the Lord  
Is a mess in the land today – and we need people with courage to rebuild it  
But look how he did it – he took 12 stones – representing their past  
Laid out the sacrifice, and trusted God to work

One of the best definition of pastoring I've ever seen  
He points to the past, and says, "Look what God has done"  
And then he points to the future and says, "Look what God will do"  
If we but come to him." And they do it over and over again

## SLIDE 5 – PASTORS IN ACTION

Paul said it this way (2 Cor 11:27):

*I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*

OK, we can throw out the naked part – but did you catch it  
I face daily the pressure of my concern for...you – that's real  
To feel the pain that everyother person in the church feels  
To watch someone make the same mistake again and again and again  
It's to struggle in prayer into night over the needs and burdens of others  
That never lets up...and it takes it toll

You see, pastors call people to God – and in our society that's tough duty  
Pastors have to answer, and model, and teach the difficult question:  
“What difference does God make in my life? Where is God in my trials?”

Well, he achieves a victory – the fire comes (37-39),  
He has the false prophets executed, and in the strength of the Spirit  
Outruns Ahab's chariot to Jezreel (46)...But what about that tweet

*Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your \*life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.”*

And Elijah, that might man of God, slayer of false prophets, outrunner of chariots  
Runs for his life – Verse 3 & 4 say:

*And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take my \*life, for I am not better than my fathers.”*

## SLIDE 6 – WHAT CHALLENGES

What's going on here? Can I just point out three things that helps us understand  
What ministry is all about, and why the call of a pastor is such a challenge4

**There was unending conflict** – Jezebel sent a messenger (2)

Just about the time Elijah thought he could let down for a bit –

Come home, settle in the recliner and rest

WHAM – another battle – ministry is like that

Pastor's deal not only with their own battles , but yours and yours and yours

And it never lets up – but ultimately the energy does – Elijah was fought out

**There was unhappiness with God** – “I have had enough O Lord (4)

I want to let you in one a deep, dark secret pastors have from time to time

Every pastor has tossed it around...including this one

“God, I’ve given you my life, my wealth, my family...can’t I get a break?

“Doesn’t all that warrant some special consideration...sometime?”

Elijah was ticked at God – three years this battle had gone on

A major victory...and now this

It’s a very dark day when a pastor thinks...”Where is God when *I* need Him?”

**Finally there was an unattainable standard** – did you catch it?

“I am no better than my ancestors (4)

That may be one of the most revealing phrases in this whole account

Man, I could stand here for hours and talk about expectations

Your expectation of your pastor, the communities expectations of him

His family’s expectation upon him, and possibly most devastating of all

His own expectations of himself – which I have often found

Are both unrealistic and unattainable

Here was Elijah trying to live up to a standard of the previous great prophets

Was he trying to be a Moses – who did battle on his own mountaintop?

One of the hardest lessons a pastor needs to learn (true for me too)

Is that God will never ask you, “Why weren’t you a Moses, a Paul,

Or a Francis Chan?” – But he will ask us, “why didn’t’ you become...

You...the you I made you to be?”

It’s so hard...because there are no standards of success

When have you prayed enough, preached enough, got enough people saved

So..If that’s the problem...how’s a sabbatical supposed to fix that?

Look what God did for Elijah

## SLIDE 7 – RENEWED SERVANT

### He renewed him physically and emotionally (5-8)

Don't miss this – it's core – when often confronted with spiritual issues

We sometimes default to spiritual answers – may be the worst place to start

Elijah was tired and worn out – How do you think he would have responded

Had God said, "Buck up, Elijah, just be a little more committed – you'll be fine"

Elijah flops in a heap – look what God did – He didn't berate him

"What are you doing here? Am I sufficient for you or not??"

"I'm so disappointed in you!"

Nope – He sends an angel to feel him (5) – sounds like a lot of mothers I know.

Then he says, "Eat more! (definitely like a mother)

Maybe the most important part of a sabbatical is just taking a break

Don't miss this – God was saying to Elijah, "I'm going to take you somewhere

And I'm going to make you into something – but your too tired right now"

Letting go, breaking the rhythm and pattern of life – relaxing

So you can hear God in a new and fresh way

Good sabbaticals follow the "8 R" plan – Relaxation, Recreation, Rest,  
Renewal, Revival, Rethink, Refocus, Return"

But you can't get to the latter without going through the former

### Only then, God renewed him spiritually (11-13)

I absolutely love this exchange – God took him on a journey that ended by a cave  
(I think Pastor Mark will have better accommodations)

Then God asks...doesn't tell..a key question – "Elijah...what are you doing here?"

That's like pulling the stopper, and man does Elijah whine

"I've been zealous..everybody's screwed up...I alone am left

Everybody's against me...I want to turn in my prophet's badge

So God sits him down and straightens him out, right?

Look, let's sort out the schedule on your iPhone

And I want you to read, "40 Days of Exhaustive Efforts" Nope

Look at (11-12) – every wonder about this exchange? I know I have

He stands on the mountain of the Lord!

First a storm, and I imagine Elijah expected God to speak out of it – nope

Then, earthquakes – sure God was here – nope

Finally, fire – purifying heat – this must be God – nope

Then, and only then, a still, small voice –

You See, I think God was “deconstructing” Elijah’s expectation

I’m the prophet of majesty and power – look what I did

Over there on the mountaintop – So God acts like the God of Moses

Except...he’s not Moses...He’s the God of Elijah

You see, it took all that to get Elijah ready to hear from God

Words literally mean, “the sound of gentle stillness

And God asks him one more time...what are you doing here

Sabbaticals position pastors to “hear God” in ways they haven’t been

Because they are too busy calling people to God

And it just takes time to get them where they can

**Because, finally, the real purpose of a sabbatical—God renewed his calling (15)**

Elijah, now your ready - you’ve come away a bit, rested a bit

Gotten above the noise of ministry a bit and found Me afresh

Now let’s talk about what I would like you to do

He gives Elijah new marching orders (15 & 16)

I want you to go here, and do this, and anoint this person

And, oh yes, I want you to anoint Elisha as prophet in your place (17)

A first read, it almost seems like censure – “You screwed up – out of the game”

Don’t think of it as replacement – think of it as reproduction

Elijah, you’ve been so busy, you need to reproduce your ministry in another

Because, frankly, you can’t do it all

You do realize that Elisha worked more miracles than Elijah?

In fact, more miracles than anyone else in the Bible except Jesus Christ

And who prepared him...Elijah

So...why sabbaticals?

Must be nice to take a three month paid vacation!

Not at all – it’s a time of “withdrawing” from the press of ministry

So the pastor can “draw near” to God in a new way

And God can “renew” his commission on Pastor Mark

But be prepared...if our text is any example

God will bring Pastor Mark back a renewed man, with a new heart and vision  
And far more effective than before

## **SLIDE 8 – DO YOU NEED TO HEAR**

May I ask **you** a question?

Do you need to hear from God in a fresh way?

We’ve all gone through a challenging year – how about using this sabbatical time

To has God to renew you

So that as he prepares your pastor...he prepares you

So that together, you will discover that one of the best chapters of this church

Is just around the corner...