

Retreat of Silence, Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired! Need for a Spiritual Change (1 Kings 19:1–18)

By Alice Brown-Collins, PhD

Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;
say to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
he will come to save you.” (Is 35:3–4)

Introduction

Do you feel like you are tired all the time? Has battling racial issues and white supremacy left you with spiritual fatigue and physical exhaustion? In this Kairos season, have you ever wondered when Black people will get a break from suffering? When will the time come when we no longer carry the “weight of the world on our shoulders,” experiencing intense emotions of anger, grief, fear, and frustration? It seems like often we, as Black people, are moving forward, and then we experience the opposition of evil and the temptation to give up or fight independently—without our God. If you desire spiritual nourishment and positive self-care, this guide offers a chance to explore Elijah’s response to disappointments, unfulfilled expectations, and God’s faithfulness and love. It is intended to be a one-day prayer retreat (six hours).

Getting Ready & Settling Down

- Select a place where you can experience solitude, and the Holy Spirit can direct your time.
- Minimize distractions. It is important to make the decision to unplug. That means putting your phone and laptop on airplane mode and refusing to get on social media.
- Make sure you have your Bible, journal, and a pen. You can also use your laptop to journal. Bring a Christian adult coloring book, art supplies, water, and snacks, if you wish.

Reflect

- Pray about the current state of your life and heart as well as your responses to systemic racism. It is important to acknowledge your feelings and be honest with God.
- Lament, grieve, and name the challenges that are causing you pain and hurt. Cry out to God.
- It is okay to not know what to pray for (Rom 8:26).
- Confess and repent of any revealed sin in your life during this season (e.g., fear, unbelief, disobedience, lack of faith, unforgiveness, rage).

Reconnect through Worship

Scripture is clear: God loves justice, and he engages in justice making (Ps 99:4). In addition, Scripture is a source of comfort and encouragement for the people of God (2 Cor 1:3–4). We connect and establish intimacy as we know him through giving ourselves to praise, gratitude, and worship.

- Take time to sit silently and ask the Holy Spirit to restore your focus on God and his goodness. Consciously give Jesus your burdens, issues, distractions, and questions.
- Thank God for being made in his image and that he loves *you*, pursues *you*, and that *you* are not alone.

Recharge through Scripture

- Read 1 Kings 19:1–18.
- What do you imagine Elijah is experiencing? What is his response to God and the adversity he is experiencing? What is God’s response to Elijah’s fatigue and exhaustion?
- What did Elijah think he needed from God? What does God think Elijah needs?
- Read the passage again and reflect on what you do when you are experiencing fatigue and exhaustion due to issues of injustice. Reflect on how God “shows up” in your spiritual life and physical life. Then pray for God to

reveal and recharge your weary soul—to set you free from any bondage that cripples your ministry, vision, joy, physical body, or anything else the Holy Spirit identifies. Pray and ask God to give you courage.

Regroup

In order to regroup, to continue developing positive relational intimacy with God, we need to have Christian self-care. According to Rev. Dr. Vanessa Quainoo¹, self-care is soul-care. In other words, you allow your soul to be cared for by God through your relationship with Jesus Christ, and you develop dependency upon God for all resources.

- How will soul-care be reflected in your life? Identify two or three soul-care habits and activities that you can do. Be specific. Also, identify a prayer partner who will join you in praying about how you will accomplish these plans.
- Finally, ask God to help you be resilient and for the ability to bounce back from life challenges (e.g., changes in ministry, facing COVID-19, economic disappointments in terms of MPD, and relationship challenges with our White brothers and sisters). Ask God to heal you from trauma. What are you dreaming about in terms of a more equitable community, especially in the university world? Pray about it.

Rest

Take time to rest and breathe in knowing . . .

“Brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.” (1 Thess 1:4–5)

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev 21:4)

¹Rev. Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quianoo, International & Associate Professor—Africana Studies and Communication Studies in the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI (sermon, 2018).