



Key Points :

- Around 30% of the population are, right now, experiencing some form of mental health issue. And all of us suffer low seasons in our lives. How can we fight this and how do we win the battle?
- In 1 Kings 19 Elijah goes from a spiritual high to not wanting to live anymore very quickly - he ends up in a cave, which is a really helpful metaphor for mental illness.
- Two factors involved in Elijah ending up in his cave are **Depletion** (emptiness, isolation and exhaustion) and **Ruminating** (stuck alone with his thoughts, taking responsibility for what isn't his etc.). Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is **REST** and while what you feel is real, it isn't necessarily **TRUE**.
- He **chooses his thoughts** (brings God's truth into his ruminating, focussing on the promises of God rather than his experiences) and he **steps into an encounter with God** after being real with God. God speaks through a gentle whisper. It's ok to not be okay. But don't settle for a lifetime of 'not ok' God is calling you out of your cave.

Questions:

Conversation Starter

1. What's your experience with mental illness. Do you know anyone who suffers?

Start Thinking & Sharing

2. Read the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:3-12. What do you think God is trying communicate to Elijah? To us?
3. What are some of the things you ruminate about? Have you found that it leads down dark paths?
4. What are some ways you've encountered God's presence in the past? What can you do to discover God's provision and rest during this time in your life?
5. How did God communicate to Elijah? How about you? How can you adjust your life to hear from Him?

Start praying. Be bold, and pray specifically.

6. God, we get to know You. Thank You for that. Thank You for speaking to us in Your still, small, voice. Teach us to find rest and provision in Your presence. Teach us to hear Your voice. Thank You for coming near to us as we draw near to You. Amen!

Start doing. Commit to a step, and live it out this week.

7. Practice waiting on God this week. Each day, ask Him to turn your needs into the gift of depending on and encountering Him.
8. Work through the **Choosing your thoughts** worksheet (below) and write your own daily declarations to bring God's truth into your thoughts.

Out of the Cave

Battling Depression, Anxiety and Worry - some tools

CHOOSING YOUR THOUGHTS

When I catch myself slipping into destructive rumination, I use God's truth to pull out the weeds and nourish the soil of my beliefs. I do this by writing out "daily declarations" based on the promises in God's Word. These statements reflect the truth about who God says I am, and they help me remember what I need to do to become the person God has made me to be.

I encourage you to write out your own declarations and read them each morning, maybe even several times a day, and especially when your emotions spill over or cloud your perspective. As you express your own daily declarations, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Write the declarations in the present tense. Declare who you are in Christ even if you're not feeling it or living it out the way you want. This will motivate you toward believing it and achieving it.
- Create declaration that confront the negative inner voices (the lies you believe, the inadequacies, uncertainties, and emotional conclusions). Keep the declarations positive.
- Make the declarations about you and God. Don't make declarations that require others to do anything to change or make you happy.
- Focus on your God-given dreams and calling.
- Read these statements every day. Revise and add to your list as you grow.

I include my daily declarations as part of my morning devotions, and I focus on my identity in Christ and my calling as a husband, father, friend, pastor and leader. Here's what my declarations are right now:

- Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life, and I exist to serve and glorify him. I am growing closer to him, and he is giving me supernatural blessing, influence, anointing and protection.
- Today, my words, thoughts, and imaginations are under the power of Christ. I take all thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ.
- I am disciplined. Christ in me is stronger than the wrong desires in me. I wake up with purpose, direction and meaning every day of my life.
- I love my wife and will lay down my life to serve her. I will show her how much I love her today.
- I love my son and will lead him to love God and serve Him with his whole heart. I nurture, equip, train and empower him to do more for God's kingdom than he can imagine.
- I love people and believe the best about them.



- I am called to reach people far from God and take people on a spiritual journey to know God, find freedom, discover purpose and make a difference.
- I am called to lead Springfield in this season, train and release leaders, and see us draw close to God and overflow with abundant life, bringing hope and transformation to our community.
- I bring my best today. The world will be different and better because I served Jesus today.
- Today, I love God, love people, pursue excellence and choose joy.
- I live to make Jesus famous and to give all the glory to God alone.

Write your own declarations or start with these and make them your own.

The key is focusing on God's truth and dispelling the enemy's lies.

Rumination muddies the water of your thinking and obscures what's true about you. Daily declarations can help you purify and cleanse your thoughts, providing a clearer perspective.

My Daily Declarations

[illegible]

Out of the Cave

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SOME TRUTHS

1. God knows what you're going through, and He loves you - He wants to give you freedom, blessings, influence, anointing and protection
2. God knows your thoughts, and He promises to renew your mind as you learn how to take those thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ
3. God knows your weaknesses, and He promises to give you strength right in the midst of them. Christ in you is stronger than the depression, anxiety and fear in you.
4. God knows your gifts and He has a unique assignment for you. You can wake up with purpose, direction and meaning every day of your life.

WHAT WON'T HELP SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH DEPRESSION

- **Trying Harder:** "Come on, now, you can snap out of this! Just try a little harder and I'm sure you'll feel better in no time."
- **Disbelieving:** "You suffer depression? But you're always smiling and seem so positive and upbeat! How can you be depressed?"
- **Over-spiritualising:** "How's your prayer life? Maybe you aren't spending enough time reading the Bible. Maybe you should wake up earlier and pray more."
- **Deflecting:** "But you have so much to be thankful for! Just look at all the blessings in your life."
- **Minimising:** "Well, I'm sure you feel bad, but honestly, it could be so much worse."
- **Criticising:** "If you weren't so hard on yourself, I bet you would feel a lot better. Just try to relax, okay? Don't be such a perfectionist all the time."
- **Comparing:** "I know it's hard for you right now, but have you thought about what it must be like for people suffering bigger losses? Maybe you just need to consider helping others instead of focusing on yourself so much."
- **Dismissing:** "You'll get over it. Just give it a little time."
- **Redirecting:** "Wow, I wish I had your problems. That's nothing compared to what I've been going through. Have I ever told you about ...?"
- **Reducing:** "You just need to get out of your head and stop thinking about stuff so much. Lighten up!"

No one wants to hear these responses when they're depressed and anxious. We need people who will use their words to shine God's love into the darkness of our cave and who are willing to come alongside us.

So what *should* you say to someone experiencing depression? How can you help them see a glimmer of God's light while they're still deep in the darkness of their cave? Basically, the rule is to say the same things you want to hear the you're struggling! Here are ten suggestions for how you can use your words to bring light to someone in the darkness of depression.

WHAT WILL HELP SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH DEPRESSION

- **Committing:** "I'm here to sit with you wherever you are right now. I'll listen and be with you no matter what you're facing."
- **Connecting:** "No matter how alone you feel, I care about you. I want you to know you're not alone."
- **Accepting:** "I care about you and what's going on in your life. Don't hold back. I'm here for you no matter what."
- **Encouraging:** "God loves you right where you are, and I know He loves you too much to let your stay there. Trust Him. He is working in you, even if you don't see it."
- **Listening:** "If you can, please tell me what it feels like. I want to listen and understand more of what this is like for you."
- **Being Trustworthy:** "I'd like to know what's going on, and I promise to keep it confidential. You can trust me if you need someone to confide in. I'm not here to judge you but to show you I care about you."
- **Supporting:** "We're going to get through this together."
- **Helping:** "Can I do something practical for you that might be helpful to you right now - clean your house or cook some meals?"
- **Giving hope:** "This is not a dead end. I know God has more for you than this. Let's talk through some options of what might be a helpful next step for you."
- **Offering a new perspective:** "Let's see how we can look at the battle from another angle"

The Bible tells us, "*Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body*" (Proverbs 16.24). This is never more evident than when we speak words of life to those in need of deep encouragement.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Jesus meets you right where you are. He has defeated death and he is more powerful than anything that could ever come against you. His victory is *your* victory. He invites you to share in his triumph.

It's okay to not be okay.

But don't settle for a lifetime of 'not okay'

God is calling you out of your cave.