

A Holy Pause Under the Broom Tree

EVERYONE has a bottoming out moment in life at some point. Even one of the greatest prophets in Scripture.

Read the following story from 1 Kings 19:1-8:

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."

Then he was afraid, and he 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 broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." And he lay down and slept under a broom tree.

And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again.

And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

Underline the words that jump out at you.

What's striking about Elijah sitting under the broom tree is that this story immediately follows one of the pinnacle moments in his ministry where Elijah and the prophets of Baal had a standoff on Mount Horeb. Elijah put his whole reputation and his very life at stake when he challenged the prophets of Baal to a battle of the altars. He not only challenged the 400 prophets of Baal but he publicly taunted Baal himself. What courage! What faith! What certainty in God's power! And God showed up!

AND YET.... the very next scene Elijah is running in fear from the threat of Jezebel. He finally collapses under a broom tree in frustration, exhaustion, and discouragement.

Let's take a holy pause and evaluate some of the things going on in your life.

On the page that has the tree image title "Taking a Pause Under the Broom Tree."

Write in the the branches of the tree. What is happening in the tree of your life above ground? If someone dropped into your life, what would they see swirling around you. Lifestage issues, ministry, everyday routines, activities, realities of your context, etc. Write these things in the branches.

Write among the roots. What is under the surface? What burdens are you carrying? What keeps you awake at night? What promises are you clinging to in the private of your heart? Big things, small things... what might others not know is happening under the surface. Write these worries, heart issues, truths that are sustaining you in this season on the different roots.

Now read I Kings 19:9-13:

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

First, take a moment to quiet yourself. In light of what you've written on your Broom Tree, reflect on God's question to Elijah:

"What are you doing here? What are you longing for at this time?"

Second, think about these questions:

- How do you best hear the voice of God?
- In what ways has God spoken to you in the past?
- What do you need to attend to God's voice at this season of your life?
- Take some time to sit quietly again and listen for the God's low whisper. Can you hear Him? If not, why not?

Now, read 1 Kings 19:13-18

When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

Underline the phrases or words that stick out to you.

In what ways did God provide for Elijah?

PAYING ATTENTION TO EMOTIONS

Looking at all three passages, go back and write in the column different emotions that Elijah or you personally felt as the story unfolded.

Now go to your Broom Tree... write some of the emotions that emerge for you when you look at your life captured there.

REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE

Looking back over your pages... what jumps out to you on your tree, in the words you underlined, or the emotions you wrote.

What might God be speaking to you from this time under the Broom Tree? Take a few moments to write out a prayer to God.

Taking a Pause Under the Broom Tree

