

In the Old Testament book of 1 Kings

We learn of a man named Elijah

Elijah faced significant trial

As a prophet

But because he was a prophet

And none of us are employed as a prophet

Show of hands

Any prophets?

Because Elijah was a prophet

His trials lose something in translation

Let me try to fix that:

Over a 3-year period

Elijah delivered extremely difficult news

News that would bring hardship on the entire nation

Elijah faced major economic pressure

You can read about it in 1 Kings 17

But long story short

He literally lived hand to mouth for 3 years

Third, Elijah endured a significant confrontation

You may have had a confrontation at work

Where your boss and your bosses boss confront you or something

But Elijah was confronted by 850 *other* prophets

In front of a large crowd for an audience

That's intense

So, at the end of the three years

He appeared strong

He appeared confident

He probably even believed those things himself

But in reality

Elijah was on the verge of a breakdown

1 Kings 19:2a (NLT) - Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you."

Now to us

That's really harsh

This was the queen after all

The whole world just honored Queen Elizabeth at her funeral

If she had ever sent me a death threat

She would have had my attention

So, to us that's harsh

But by comparison

Elijah had faced much worse

He faced death every day for 3 years

If God hadn't provided food

If God hadn't provided water in a drought-ravaged land

If God hadn't protected him from the King who wanted to kill him

So, you wouldn't think Jezebel's little threat

Would get much attention

But it sent Elijah into a tailspin

And by that night

He was all alone

Crawled up underneath a tree

Praying that he would die

1 Kings 19:3-4a (NLT) - Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life."

Elijah was suicidal

Moments like this

Reveal areas of weakness in our souls

Several years ago

My daughters participated in Destination Imagination

So, I volunteered to help coach

And our kids chose to do an engineering challenge

Thankfully, they partnered me with a guy

Who soon became a pretty good friend of mine

Who was a structural engineer

Which was good

Because I was just a goofy pastor

The idea was

The kids build a little tower

Out of balsa wood

And they'd put weight on it

To see how much it would hold

So, over the months preparing

They made several mockups

And it was amazing how much I learned

They'd build a tower

And test it

And see where it failed

And so, then they'd bulk up that part of the design

And build a *new* tower

And over the months

It became stronger and stronger

It was always at the weakest spot

That it broke

This was true of little Balsa wood towers

It's true in Elijah's life

And it's true for us today

It's in moments of testing

That reveal areas of weakness in our lives

Now, I want you to catch something really important:

Elijah was a good man

Elijah was a Godly man

Elijah was a strong man

But he broke:

Not physically

Although there were implications for his body

Not spiritually

Although there were implications there as well

He broke emotionally

And that certainly had implications

For his body and his mind and his soul

This week in our reading

All five devotionals

We're going to be answering four specific questions

And our answers

To those four specific questions

Will really help set the course of our emotional well being

Our answers

To those four specific questions

Defines what the authors call our "Heart Logic"

The way our heart

Our thinking and emotions

Make sense of our world

That's why today's message

And this week's reading
Is entitled "Heart Logic"

Full disclosure

When I read through them
I knew the right answer for all four

But I only *really* agreed with three of them
Emotionally

And when I stopped

And prayerfully gave that one question its due consideration
I realized that this is a pretty large area of unhealth
That God and I are going to have to work thru

And we are...

And we will...

Last December, American Airlines Flight #2323

From Boston to Phoenix
Had to make a pitstop in Oklahoma City
Because it was running low on fuel

Now if you're not a geography major
Oklahoma City is not Phoenix
Oklahoma City is not *near* Phoenix

Oklahoma City is 800 miles from Phoenix
Nearly the same distance as Oklahoma City
Is to Spring Hill

Now I don't fly as much as some of you do
But if the pilot tells me we're running out of gas
800 miles short
My confidence level starts to droop

Investigators called it

A "Wildly Strong Headwinds Force"

In addition to American Airlines Flight #2323
Other westbound flights were arriving as much as an hour late
Because of headwinds
Eastbound flights were arriving as much as 45 minutes early
Because of the wind at their back

Headwinds are powerful forces
Their strength
Is their constant impact
Their constant wear

I mean, can you imagine
How much force it takes

To slow a plane down a full hour?

Emotional winds

Likewise

Can be exhausting

This is the way that God's people felt

Back in the Old Testament

The Assyrians had invaded

And overtaken the Israelites in 722 BC

And they ruled the people

Until 586 BC

When the Babylonians conquered the Assyrians

And that lasted until 539 BC

When the Persians conquered the Babylonians

And let the Israelites return home from captivity

Those are big dates

By the way

In Jewish history

722 with the Assyrians

586 with the Babylonians

539 with the Persians

Just for trivia sake:

The Babylonians are modern day Iraq

The Persians are modern day Iran

They've been at war a long time

But look at those dates again

That means for 183 years

From 722 – 539

183 years!

The culture functioned

As a captured people

Do you see that?

They were oppressed

Dominated

Burdened

By the Assyrians

And then the Babylonians

And it began to affect

Their collective psyche

For perspective

If today, we had just been set free by Cyrus the Persian King
And we were looking back 183 years
To the last time we had tasted freedom

Martin Van Buren would have been the President

The year would have been 1839
Just before the Civil War

A lot has changed
Since Marty was in charge

My point – this is not a couple years
This is an incredibly significant
Period of time
If a people had been in captivity that long
Think of the *generational* mindsets and habits
That would be baked in

God's people had developed a bad self-image
God's people had understandably developed a distant view of God
Because He had allowed them to be in captivity
Since Martin Van Buren lived in the White House

So, God sends the prophet Isaiah to speak to this

Now, before I read out of Isaiah 43

I want to address a nagging question
That maybe floating around out here

Whenever I read about the troubles in our world

The famine and the war and the genocide

The poverty and corruption and violence

I think “what in the world do I have to complain about?!?”

When I read about God’s people

Living in captivity for 183 years

Or in the early church, being martyred for their faith

I think, “What in the world do I have to complain about?!?”

But let me speak to that a minute

In case anybody else is asking *that* question

According to a study by US News and World Reports

The US, who ranks #1 in economic power, military power, best universities
--

The US also ranks #3 in most depressed

The US ranks #3 for anxiety

#3 for schizophrenia

#3 for bipolar disorder

And #2 for alcohol and drug use

And we lead the developed world in deaths due to firearms.

We're tempted to say that technology and wealth

Has removed all our problems

But the reality is

We face many challenges in our culture

Many headwinds

Generational mindsets and habits

That have just been baked in to *our* culture

And they've been there long enough

That we now think they're normal

They're not... normal

This... is not normal

God sent the prophet Isaiah to speak to *their* dysfunction

And I think his words speak to us today as well:

Isaiah 43:1-3a (NLT) - But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the One who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine."

God wants to make sure

That they know He sees them

He knows them

He cares

“Do not be afraid... I have called you by name... you are Mine.”

And though our challenges are different than theirs

I believe they are just as damaging

And I believe his words help us... just.as.much

“Do not be afraid... I have called you by name... you are Mine.”

He continues:

When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Some of us need to hear this today

When you feel like you're in deep water

Lots of difficulty

Getting burned

You are not... alone

“For I am the Lord, *your* God, the Holy One... *your* Savior”

Let that speak to your soul a moment

You may *feel* alone

But that's a lie

Re-read

He continues in verse 19:

Isaiah 43:19b-21 (NIV) - I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honor Me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland,

This is cool:

God says I take care of the jackals and the owls

And they honor me

So, when you hear coyotes howling

That's the North American version of a jackal

Or the owls hooting

Isaiah says, they're giving praises to our God

For the water in the streams

That He's provided for them

But that's not why He really did it

Don't tell the coyotes

They think it's about them

But all the streams aren't just for them

He did it,

to give drink to My people, My chosen, the people I formed for Myself that they may proclaim My praise.

Man, I hope you catch this:

God is speaking to a people

With significant self-image issues

And they've had generations of mindsets and habits

Baked in

So, their "heart logic"

Would be significantly flawed

I think the average person in Spring Hill today

Has "heart logic" that is *significantly* flawed as well

So, He's saying to us

The God of the Universe is saying to us:

I made all this for you

My people

My chosen

The people I formed for Myself

That's the mindset God wants for us

Just like He was calling the people of Isaiah's day

To a radical recalibration

He's calling us

Who are leading the world in depression, anxiety, drug & alcohol use

He's calling us

To a radical recalibration

What if our anxious, troubled culture

Really understood the heart of Almighty God?

What if we get our heart aligned properly?

Show of hands:

Have you ever had your car go out of alignment?

Sometimes it happens from normal wear and tear

Sometimes it happens because the driver thinks that curbs are irrelevant

But when your car goes out of alignment

Your wheels

Actually, want to go

A different direction

So, you're driving this way

But your wheels want to go that way

When your car gets out of alignment

You're actually steering constantly
 Just to keep straight
On a car
 You'll get worn tires
If your heart is out of alignment
 You'll get worn relationships
 Worn emotions
 Well-worn paths of anxiety and fear
And God wants more for us
 Than that

Hang on to that thought a second
 I don't want to lose where we are

<i>So, I'll come right back... here</i>

Groups of people
 Change and adapt
Like a pendulum

And often
 When they are reacting to one thing that was off
They over-correct
 And swing too far the other way

So, for years

Church was inaccessible

Some of you grew up in that church

The music was super dated

The Bible sounded like Shakespeare

The application was limited

But you showed up

Paid your dues

And went home

Over the last 50 years

Church in America has tried hard to become more accessible

We've updated our music and production

We've updated our Bible translations

We've focused much more on every day, life application

Which is great

But like people often do

We've over-swung the pendulum

And now

Many churches rarely open a Bible

Many Christians own 2.7 Bibles

That they never open

Add that all together

And we have a recipe for disaster

Because Jesus taught us

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV) - Therefore everyone who hears these Words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these Words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Storms come

Streams rise

The metaphorical wind blows and beats against

Every house

In every generation

But our generation has decided

Instead of building our lives

Building our families

Building our mindsets

On the Word of God

We'll just build it on something else

And we wonder why so many of us

Have no foundation

The prophet Isaiah

Whom we read from a few moments ago

Also wrote this:

Isaiah 40:8 – The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever.

God's Word doesn't age out

It doesn't become dated or irrelevant

It's not like the grass or flowers

It's not like fads and trends and technology

It endures... forever

Psalms 119:89-90a – Your Word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the Heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; You established the earth, and it endures.

Even though we sometimes think

God's Word is shaky down here

Heaven knows better

God's Word stands firm in the Heavens

So, we need to tether our life

To His wisdom

And His authority

And His guidance

Because His Word stands firm

Today

When our world faces many headwinds

When the only thing consistent is change

When each of us have a pile of personal headwinds

On top of the ones everyone else has

It is essential

That you build your life

Your family

Your relationships and your emotions

On the solid foundation

Of God's Word

And on a relationship

With the One who created all of this

For you to enjoy

And so that He could enjoy it

With you

Can I encourage you

To come near to God

Can I encourage you

To put in the work

To make this book your life's foundation

Can I beg you

To believe what He says about you

Instead of what *you* say about you

What culture says about you

Psalms 119 says:

Your Word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the Heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations

If you don't know

Personally

That His faithfulness endures

In this generation

I invite you

To see it for yourself

To feel it for yourself

It's firm

When everything is shifting sand