

## Becoming the Church People Actually Need

### Part 1: You Don't Have to Be Impressive... Just Present

1 Kings 19:4-18

**Summary:** When you're tired, disappointed, or ready to quit, God doesn't ask you to be impressive... just present.

#### Main Ideas:

What if unmet expectations free us to discover something better?

Sometimes all we need is a nap and a snack.

Crosscreek is not a machine to keep feeding. It's a table to rest around.

We usually find God showing up in the mundane, simple parts of everyday life.

We're no longer focused on how we're perceived... we're focused on who we're inviting to the table.

We don't need fire from heaven. We need a whisper in the quiet... and the courage to keep loving.

#### Invitation:

Pick one day, or even just a morning or evening, this week to stop.

Pray: God, meet me in the quiet. Help me hear your whisper.

Then show up.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What's something you've quit in the past (a job, a hobby, a relationship)? Why did you quit?
2. What expectations (about church, life, or faith) have you had that didn't turn out like you hoped?
3. Read 1 Kings 19:4-8. What stands out to you about Elijah's state of mind in this moment?
  - Why do you think God's first response to Elijah's despair was sleep and food instead of instruction or correction?
4. What might it look like for you to rest in a healthy, intentional way this week?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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#### Transcript:

**ME:** When have you ever quit something?

- What happened?

- How did it feel during and afterward?

A few months ago, the leadership team started a conversation about quitting.

- Should Crosscreek keep going? Is it worth it?
- We're tired, but not just tired... soul-tired

By typical church standards, we'd be seen as a failure.

- But what if those aren't the standards that matter?

We started Crosscreek b/c we firmly believed a community like this is desperately needed in Salem.

- A community specifically designed from the ground up for people who don't normally go to church

- A group of people who accept you no matter where you come from, what you've done, how you look/vote/etc.

And as we started, it was clear this vision was from God

- Money came just when needed.
- People came and caught the vision and jumped on board
- Grew from 20 people to over 100

And then COVID hit

- Halted our in-person gatherings... while keeping teaching and groups online
- But people disagreed... some core volunteers/givers wanted us open.
- We refused to jump on either political bandwagon.

So people went to other places that agreed with their views

- 80% of our Kid Min volunteers left... rule #1 can't grow a church w/o kids min.
- #'s dropped

We dreamed of our own space. A church-planting network. A kids ministry where kids begged to come back every week.

- Instead, not even an office. No staff. June attendance- 14, 18, 18.
- 6.5 of the original 20 are still here.
- A few doing a lot.

Huge dreams (mine especially) now feel like distant, fleeting wishes.

So Crosscreek has been through some stuff...

But maybe you've felt some similar disappointments, too.

Maybe you're wondering... Why are we still doing this? Why do we keep showing up?

Or maybe it has nothing to do with church...

- Maybe your life hasn't turned out how you planned.
- Maybe you feel like no matter how hard you try, you keep hitting wall after wall.
- Hopes and dreams have turned into... if only's

I want to invite all of us to consider... What if faithfulness isn't measured by numbers, but by courage? By constancy? By refusing to quit when the story gets hard?

What if unmet expectations free us to discover something better?

**GOD:** What's encouraging is this is nothing new for God.

He knows we expect our stories to work out a certain way, with a certain timeline, and when things don't, we don't take it very well.

We even have a story of him dealing with someone in this situation from around 860 BC...

Elijah, a man God used powerfully, hit a point where it felt like everything he'd given his life to was collapsing.

- His expectations didn't just pan out... They were shattered.
- So he ran. And hid. And asked God if it was time to quit.
- Not just quit but die... he was pretty dramatic.
- And God shows him... you haven't failed... you just need to rest and show up.

What we're learning through tears, prayer, and exhaustion is this:

- We don't have to chase fire from heaven.
- We need to rest, listen for the whisper, and keep loving.

That's what God showed Elijah. And it's what we believe God's showing us.

When we pick up his story, Elijah's just had a big showdown with the evil king Ahab, his wife Jezebel, and 850 idol-worshipping prophets.

He called down fire from heaven to burn up his sacrifice and then slaughtered the false prophets... but Jezebel vows to kill him, so he runs for his life.

**1 Kings 19:4** *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, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."*

Sounds dramatic... but we've all been there.

Think about it... He had risked everything. He thought the fire from heaven would fix everything...that people would finally repent, that Jezebel would back down, that things would turn around.

But instead... all he got was a death threat.

- He's alone, exhausted, and disillusioned.
- He's asking, 'What more could I possibly do?'
- He's not just tired... he's done.

He's disappointed with his life... AND he's disappointed with God.

And that's somewhere almost all of us have been.

Life seems to be going well, you experience some success, and then "WHAM!" you get smacked in the face with bad news, someone's screw up that affects you, or some relationship turmoil.

I've been there so often... have a great week, family is happy, excited about new ideas, amazing Sunday service, and then see an email in my inbox from a family telling me they are leaving.

- FYI: I don't check my email on Sundays anymore.

It's almost like the highs make the lows feel even lower... climbed this mountain only to fall into a deep valley.

And in those times, we ask, "Is this even worth it?"

- "If I had just stayed off the mountain, I wouldn't have fallen as far."

Things aren't shaping up how we expected, so we are ready to give up, throw it away, and find an easier path.

But when we hit those times, we can follow Elijah's example...

God doesn't want us to pretend everything is ok, pretend we have it all together, and just power through.

- He wants us to name our pain, acknowledge our hurt, and bring them to him.

And that's what the leadership team decided to do.

We named the hurt, the frustration, the fear, and took a month to pray about it on our own... and what he showed us is very similar to what he showed Elijah...

**1 Kings 19:5-9a** *Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again. Then the angel of the LORD came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.*

Sometimes all we need is a nap and a snack.

We treat ourselves and our lives like machines that keep running and grinding until they ultimately break.

We do it with churches too... keep the machine going.

- Every Sunday, another service... make it good so we can get more volunteers and dollars to keep doing services.

But what if enjoying God and the life he offers isn't about grinding a machine but resting at a table?

- What if we aren't made to work until we drop... but designed for a slower rhythm that actually allows us to enjoy the life we've been given?

It's what Jesus did.

- When he was exhausted, misunderstood, or facing betrayal, he withdrew.
- The accounts of his life show him constantly retreating to lonely places, not to avoid people, but to be with the Father.

Jesus didn't push through burnout... he trusted the Father's pace, not people's pressure.

- He napped in a boat.
- He ate with his friends

- He walked away from the crowds.
- He trusted that love doesn't require hurry.

If Jesus did that... why shouldn't we?

So when the leadership came back from our month of prayer... we had taken a breath, been honest with God, we really felt God was telling us to enjoy more naps and snacks.

So we've decided to intentionally and consistently stop and remember: Crosscreek is not a machine to keep feeding. It's a table to rest around.

We are going to take regular breaks.

- Usually corresponding to holidays.
- Where we don't meet, we don't do a service project.
- We just rest.
- We give our volunteers and staff a chance to nap and snack.

And when we do, I think we'll see we are recharged and have the energy for the journey ahead.

- Just like Elijah was ready to walk for 40 days to finally hear what he needed...

But that intentional rest will make us look different from what people might expect a church to look like.

- It'll force us to discover God in a different way than we've been told "works"...

Just like it did for Elijah...

**1 Kings 19:9b-13** *But the LORD said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

Elijah already saw God show up through fire from heaven.

- That's probably what he expected again.

This time... fire isn't how God speaks.

- The mountain rumbles. The earth shakes. The wind screams.
- But none of it is God.
- Had to be confusing.

And I think we've all been there: We expect God to show up one way and then he doesn't.

We expect God to show up in a big way!

- A mighty rushing of wind over our community!
- The earth shaking and experiencing dramatic shifts in thinking and lives

We picture fire falling, blazing across the sky... evidence of God's power.

But more often, he moves in ways that are quieter, slower... more ordinary.

- We usually find God showing up in the mundane, simple parts of everyday life.

So, as leadership, we've stopped chasing big, stopped chasing impressive.

We've let go of the dream (maybe it was just my dream) of big stages and polished performances...not because they're wrong... but because they're just not us.

We are who God has made us.

- If we stay small, we will enjoy the quiet simplicity.
- If more people come, we will still practice quiet simplicity while enjoying each other and Jesus.

Jesus never chased crowds.

- He never looked for fire from heaven at the expense of the moment in front of him.
- He washed feet.
- He didn't try to be influential... he shared meals.

And on the cross, when it looked like the story was over... he proved: there's more.

Jesus didn't rise from the grave to create a franchise. He rose to form a community and a family.

That's us. That's what we're becoming.

Elijah had to accept that even if it didn't look like he expected, God still had a plan for him... so in that quiet whisper God tells Elijah it's not time to give up... there's still more in store for you...

**1 Kings 19:14-18** *He replied again, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." Then the LORD told him, "Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. Then anoint Jehu grandson of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!"*

Elijah thought his story was over.

But God said, 'There's more to do... and people you haven't even met yet who are part of it.'

More work. More help. More story.

He thought he was the last. But there were 7,000 more quietly waiting to play their part.

So maybe that's where we are, too.

Maybe Crosscreek isn't running out of story...

Maybe we're just getting ready for the next chapter.

Maybe this isn't the end of the story, but the end of the beginning of the story.

So what are we becoming now?

- We're becoming a community that doesn't hustle to impress, but quietly shows up to heal.
- We're becoming real-life companions more than religious consumers.
- We're becoming the kind of church that doesn't measure itself by parking lots and platforms... but by presence, honesty, trust, and shared tables.

We're no longer focused on how we're perceived... we're focused on who we're inviting to the table.

Because there's nothing like this in Salem.

- People aren't just hungry for truth...
- They're starving for real connection.
- And we've been through enough to know: that's exactly what we can offer.

**YOU:** So what can we do now?

- We rest and show up.

Pick one day, or even just a morning or evening, this week to stop.

- No hustling. No checking off boxes. Just rest.
- Sleep in. Go for a walk. Turn your phone off.
- Eat something slowly and gratefully.

And as you rest, simply pray: God, meet me in the quiet. Help me hear your whisper.

But we can't let this become all rest and no action.

- The resting is designed to re-energize us for our role.

So rest and then show up.

You might not think it matters if you're here, but it does.

When you walk in the door, pour a cup of coffee for someone new, when you set up or clean up, when you participate in our discussions or simply sit near someone... you're creating a table for people to discover true love.

Your quiet faithfulness might be the whisper someone else has been praying for.

Let's rest without guilt, show up without pressure, and offer people not perfection... but presence.

And maybe someone in your neighborhood, your work, your circle, is bone-tired too.

- Maybe they've given up on church.
- Maybe they've been waiting for an invitation not to sit in a pew... but to share a table.
- You might be the whisper they need to hear.

Listen... We're not done. We're being re-formed.

And the next chapter is about making space... at the table, in our homes, and with Jesus.

I'm done worrying about WHERE we're going. I'm focusing on HOW we're going.

That's what makes us Crosscreek.

**WE:** B/c... We aren't done.

And maybe we're still tired.

But instead of trying harder... we'll rest better. We'll move slower. We'll live deeper. And we'll keep showing up.

Jesus is still the whisper in the quiet. And he's still calling friends to tables instead of platforms.

- Followers instead of fans. Companions instead of consumers.

Whether someone's been hurt by the church, been told they don't fit, been rejected or pushed out, or never been invited.

Whether they're burned out or just looking for something more...

We are here. God is here.

- We'll listen for the whisper.
- And we'll keep making room for the ones still waiting to hear it.

We don't need fire from heaven. We need a whisper in the quiet... and the courage to keep loving.