

How God Fills Us Up at Low Points of Life: Session 1

By Jill Briscoe

Speaker 1:

In Liverpool, England. Educated in the Cambridge school system, Jill Briscoe taught in the British school system. You'll quickly learn that she's not from Atlanta, Georgia. She has been in at Biola University on a number of occasion occasions both in the Torrey Conference and in our Missions Conference in separate chapels whenever we can get her. 30 years ago, maybe even a little bit more, she married the handsome Stuart Briscoe, who is still her husband. They have two sons and one daughter. Jill has spoken at Urbana and to highlight one place where she's spoken would be unfair, because both Jill and her husband, Stuart have spoken virtually all over the world in South Africa, in every corner, and we're always delighted when she is available and willing to return to Biola.

Jill has been uniquely used, not only here but in a number of schools across the nation to kind of stir seeds of renewal and revival. And it's the prayer of those that put the conference together that along with the other speakers, that's what will happen to us in our hearts and lives this week. Jill is going to speak on Elijah this morning. How unique that she would do that and be in tune with the song. She's also going to introduce her elective at this time so that you'll have an idea which of the two in the next hour you would choose from. Will you please warmly welcome back to Biola University, Jill Briscoe. I'm up here with you.

Jill Briscoe:

Thank you very much. It's neat to be back here again, and I would like to tell you what I'm going to do. I wrote a book not too long ago. I was asking somebody if they'd read it. I said, Have you read my last book? And they said, I hope so. Never mind. But it isn't actually my last book, but it was written basically for my own benefit. And it came out of some searching and seeking I've been doing it's called Running On Empty, and I seem to spend my life running in evangelical circles, meeting myself, coming back. And there comes a point where you discover that if you're not careful, you find yourself running on empty. And I wanted to find out if there was anyone else like me in the Scriptures. I mean, I expected some small people like myself, but what I found was it was the biggies. It was the people that God really used that came up running on empty.

And so then I wanted to discover how God met them at the low points of their life and filled them up. And out of that came a series of talks. And it's some of those that I will be sharing with you in these sessions. And so each elective and main session that I have with you, I will just choose another character and we'll look into his life together. And I always like to be confirmed in what God has told me to do. And there again it was the song that said, That's the one for this morning. So I'd like to turn you in your Bibles if you have them with you to I Kings 19.

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and how he killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely if by this time tomorrow, I do not make your life like one of them. Elijah was afraid and he ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba and Judah left his servant there while he himself

went a day's journey into the desert. And he came to a broom tree and he sat down under it and he prayed that he might die. I've had enough, Lord, he said, I've had it, Lord, take my life.

I'm no better than my ancestors. Then he lay down under the tree and he fell asleep. All at once, an angel touched him and said, Get up and eat. He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, a jar of water. He ate and drank, and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, Get up and eat for the journey is too much for you. So he got up and he ate and he drank and strengthened by that food, he traveled 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. Then he went into a cave and spent the night.

And I'm sure this story is most familiar to you. I'm trusting it is because it's a long story and I want to borrow from different parts of it. I was in the home of a good friend of mine not too long ago. She is married to a professor at a seminary and I was there for some meetings and she has three gorgeous kids, all in various ages, of driving her crazy at the moment. The littlest one is aged about four or five and at the table the first night as we sat there, the kids were telling me a little bit about themselves, but this little four or five year old was looking at me with huge big brown eyes and was a little shy. And his daddy leant across the table and he said, Tell Jill what you want to be when you grow up.

His eyes got bigger and bigger, and I was waiting for an engine driver or any of those things that little children always seem to want to be. And he looked at me very seriously and he said, Bigger. And I thought about that. And in my heart I said, yes, Lord, please, me too. I want to be

bigger. Do you want to be bigger? Because, you know, spiritually, if we stop wanting to be bigger, we will and we'll stay just as little as we are right now. I want to talk about how to be bigger. I'll be sharing a lot from my own heart's search and desire as I know Karen will be. About how to do that, how to let God do that in our lives.

But Elijah was bigger. I mean, he was one of the biggest. One of the biggest. He's a Biggie, not a little tiny dust man like most of us. Of course, we're all dust men, all little dust people with dust minds and dust bodies. And we eat dust food and take dust pills. We're all dust people. But you see, human beings are dignified dust because God has dignified us by divinity. When divinity comes and lives in our lives, then our little dust abilities are dignified, aren't they? And Elijah had been dignified by divinity in a big sense. He was a Biggie. He was one of God's best. And yet here we find him flat on his face under his broom tree, saying, I've had it, Lord, I've had it. I'm going to talk about that broom tree.

And hopefully I'm going to give you some pictures that are going to be there in your mind. I want to ask you, have you ever found yourself flat in your face under the broom tree? A pooped prophet saying, I've had it up to here, Lord, with everything. Have you ever been so burned out you can't burn on? My husband has a friend who is a preacher. Maybe he's been here. His name is Olan Hendrix. He's a Bible teacher. He loves to travel the world, teaching the Bible. He has a dear wife who doesn't love to travel the world with her husband. She's very happy to stay home and keep the home fires burning and pray them out and pray them on.

But there's one country in the world he loves more than any other. And that's Africa. And there's one place she was determined not to go. And that was Africa. And he used to think to himself, if only I could get my wife to see that statue of Livingstone gazing over Africa at the background of the Victoria Falls, then I know she'd love it as much as I could. And to cut a long story short, he persuaded his wife to go with him. And off they went. Well, it was her worst nightmare come true. The biggest bugs in Africa were waiting to greet her at the airport, and all of that that happens to one woman travels in Africa, happened to her.

So all our worst fears were confirmed. And he kept thinking, Well, if only I can get around that corner as you come around this corner in Zimbabwe and you see the Victoria Falls and against it, the statue of Livingstone gazing over Africa, I know that she will change her mind. And so the great day came. And they came around the corner and Olan Hendrix said, There he is, Darling, just look at him gazing over his Africa. And it was indeed one of the seven wonders of the world. And she stood there and looked at him for a minute. And he said, what do you think he's thinking? And she said, I think he's saying, I've had it up to here with Africa.

Have you ever had it up to here with Africa, with Biola, with church, with the Christian world? I'm well aware that many of you young people have had it up to here with our generation at this point in Christendom. We have let you down, haven't we? The integrity of the Christian world in their lives and ministry and marriages is lying shattered on the deck. And I have had some angry young people in this last year or two say to me, who can we trust of your generation? That's a very good question. And sometimes we've had it up to here for all sorts of reasons. Now the

trouble is, when you get tired of the work of God, not just in the work of God, all of us will be tired in the work of God.

I'm talking to us lay people. I am not a professional Christian. I've never been on the staff of any mission or church in my life. I represent the lay person, a lay woman. And yet we can be so busy for the Lord that we can get tired of the work. My husband says, I think I was born tired. I've lived tired and I'm going to die tired and if I get to heaven and I'm still tired and coming straight back. And I know what he feels like because that's how it's going to be. And we probably will be like that. There's not enough people on the front lines. There's not enough people doing the job. So we're going to be tired. So what? We just do it tired. That's how it is. But to be tired in the work of the Lord and to be tired of it is two different things.

Now, Elijah, as I've said, was not a generic Christian. Do you ever stand in the supermarket and look at all those generic things? You have nothing much to do. That's where I get a lot of illustrations from my talks. I copy those ghastly headlines off the awful papers and they give me some openers. I saw one last week. No, this wasn't last week. There was a few whatever ago, but it said "Starving Dieter Breaks into Store and Eats It Empty." No, I mean, they're just crazy things. But I had this terrific picture of this starving dieter eating the shelves empty. I don't know what I use that for, except as an illustration now of nothing. But anyway, as I am standing in this generic store, I'm looking at the generic things and I'm saying to the Lord, don't let me ever be a generic Christian Lord, because I think we got a lot of those around.

I don't want to be a generic Christian, and seeing the line is long. I get out my pen and like all typical writers start and wild away, time away and I wrote this generic Christians' fervency and this is what brings me to it because Elijah was talked about as being a fervent stretched out sort of personality in prayer, in action. Fervency is a fighting fervor that saves us from being generic Christians. Believers without a patent plain colorless with no distinct markings on our lives. Generic disciples settle for cheap faith, a possible Christianity so that their type of faith will do. But when they're asked what it will do, they're hard put to answer.

Fervency refuses to buy the idea of generic faith, determining rather to spend more, whatever the cost, in terms of ardor and effort to purchase a brand of belief that has an unmistakable quality about it. The quality of fervor hot, exciting power that insists on faith being more than a minimal involvement. Content with a passing grade. After all, the fervent effectual, prayer of a righteous man avails much while generic ineffectual prayer of righteous men avails little or nothing at all. Fervent faith is a daily choice for the follower of Jesus. It marks a man or woman out from the generic pack. It makes us want to be like him because Jesus was not generic. In the words of an outrageous song, they don't make Jews like Jesus anymore.

Perhaps the world believes they don't make anyone like Jesus anymore because of us. I don't want to be generic. Are you generic? I'm afraid I'm too often a generic Christian. Elijah was not generic. James tells us that when he prayed the heaven was shut up and when he prayed again three years later, the heaven was opened. Is that the sort of prayer that you and I involve ourselves in? I would love to stand here and tell you some Elijah prayers. I'd be hard put to find any quite like that that God has answered on my behalf. But I want to be like that. I want to learn

to pray like that. God, I want to be bigger. Do you want to be bigger? I want to be bigger in my prayer life. I want to know what it is to pray and see heaven shut up and I want to know what it is to pray and see heaven open.

I don't want to be generic. I don't want to be fan flat my face under a broom tree saying I've had it Lord take away my life. Now we have to think, why was he burned out at this point? I've got a feeling that if he was around today, he would have been analyzed by our psychologists and typified as an A type. I'm sure he would've been. If you look at the whole of his life. He bursts on the scene of history and he bursts out of the scene of history goes up to heaven in a fiery chariot. And that's Elijah. We see ravens feeding him, which was an incredible thing, if you think about it, who'd want to be fed by ravens? Where do they get their food? But that's another story.

God had miraculously sent birds that do not carry meat in their beaks to sustain this man. At the point of his desperation, he had seen God at work in his past. After the ravens had finished their work and the brook had dried up, God moved him on to be sustained by a little widow woman. And that not of Israel. That was another humility for him. But God had protected and kept him hidden there because old Ahab, who was King Compromise on the throne of Israel at the time, was after him. Why was Ahab after him? Because they believed he'd put a curse on the weather. And they wanted to torture him into reversing it presumably. Why would Ahab, King of Israel do something like that? Because of his wife. Wives have great influence on people, you know.

And Ahab had married a fellow. Fellow. Excuse me. Ahab had married a woman out of political conscience. Her name was Jezebel, which tells you something about her. Tells you about her

god. Tells you about her religion. He had married Jezebel to get Jezebel's father off his back and to make sure that Jezebel's father didn't gobble up Israel like Jezebel's father was gobbling up everything else around. And so this old King Compromise, who knew better, had this very strong wife. Not only did he have the very strong wife, but he had the very strong wife's prophets. Take me, take my profits, apparently, she said. And so 800 of them at least came with her.

Jezebel worshipped Baal. Baal, reputedly in tradition, was supposed to be the son of El. El was the god that most people had worshiped until he didn't seem to come through anymore. And then the idea arose that his son Baal could do a better job and he had taken over. It wasn't that El was dead, he was just weak. And now Baal was the god of thunder. Baal was the god of lightning and fire. Baal was the one that could shut up heaven. Baal was the one that could open heaven. Then onto the scene of history came Eiyah, Elijah, whose name tells you a lot about him. He came around and said, no, as true as my name is, El is the God who shuts up heaven. And I'll show you.

And he prayed. And God said, I'll do it. It's done. So Israel was seeing this battle of the Baal and the Elijah come into their own front room, into their own backyard. And Elijah came back and faced Ahab after this incredible period when the sky had been shut up. And he said, Bring the whole of Israel to sea. We'll just prove it once and for all what's going to happen here. And so you know the story they all got together on the mountain. Mount Carmel and Baal's Prophet said Baal, show them that you are the real god, the god of thunder and lightning and rain and crops and all the rest of it. And Elijah teased them rather rudely actually.

He said, maybe he's on vacation, or maybe he's gone to the bathroom. That's the word he uses. Provoked them into screaming and cutting themselves and getting all sorts of things going. But of course, Baal, he can't answer because he isn't there. But Elijah, El, the creator God who is indeed the God of fire and creation. Yah Jehovah, the one who has involved himself in the affairs of men, he answered, didn't he? And the fire fell. Consumed Elijah's sacrifice. And you see, Elijah could look back on his past and say, I have seen God work in my past.

The fire fell on my ministry. Anybody can build an altar, anybody can get their doctrine straight. Anybody can start a church and just go through the ritual of putting in the right programs and doing the right thing. But can anybody see the fire fall? You've got to be in, Elijah. You got to be bigger. He'd seen the fire fall and God had been all he needed in his past and let me tell you something, God was going to be only needed in his future, because in Luke's gospel, we see Elijah after death and Luke 9 talking to Jesus. It's on the Mount of Transfiguration if you remember.

And Elijah could have told you if you had been able to interview him under the broom tree and in typical American fashion, pushed a microphone under his nose and said, how'd you feel? If that had been the possibility and that had happened, Elijah would have raised his tired head, his sick head and said, Listen, God has been sufficient in my past. I've seen the fire fall and God is going to be sufficient in my future one day when I stand on the Mount of God, it's going to be all right. But ask me what I feel like now, in my present. And I'll tell you, I'm flat on my face under the broom tree. And I would like to say to those of you that are listening to me now and alerted in your soul that this is for you, you know who you are.

I want to talk to those of you that are there. That say, yes, I can look back to an incredible conversion. I can look back to being on the streets in ministry and witnessing and I saw the fire fall and God put his touch on what I was doing. People came alive, lives were changed. God saved me out of this and saved me from that. And yes, I saw the fire fall. And listen, I could stand up and tell you that when I get to heaven, it's going to be all right. And I'm going to be talking to Jesus on the Mount of God. But ask me what I feel like now. I've had it lord, take away my life. I'm no better than my father's. And you're going through a broom tree experience. Now, how did God meet Elijah and lift him at this low point of life?

You know, when you're reading the Bible, please peek around the corner of the verse. If you never peek around the corner of the verse, you'll never see who's standing in the shadows and you'll never smell the smells and you'll never see the colors. And you'll never see what people are dressed in or they'll hear the gossip. You see, Bible study is so much more than black print on the white page. And you say, Well, that sounds like [inaudible] to me, Jill, that sounds like putting things in. No, it's just getting the whole picture. When I first came to America, the very first time, I took a car out and drove on the wrong side of the road, which you say is the right side of the road and was concentrating very hard, I pushed a button that was the wrong button in this American car, and the radio came on. And it was the first time I'd ever heard American radio.

And to my amazement, there were all these advertisements which we don't have on BBC at home in England. And so I was very fascinated. In fact, I was more interested in the advertisements than I was in what was saying in the half minute in between the 2 hours of advertisement. And I

pushed another button and I got the news and I thought, oh, good. I'm panting for news. I just need to know what's happening in the world because I had already discovered that American news is very insular. And as long as it touches America, you'll hear about it in the rest of the world but if it's not internal, then you don't hear much. And I was desperate for a word from Europe from the rest of the world. And so I heard it. Total information news. And I thought, Great, I'm going to get the whole story.

Well, to my amazement, I heard one and a half minutes of headlines, and then they went back to the advertisement and they said, this was total information news. And I said, You're kidding. Except I didn't say, You're kidding, because I haven't been in America long enough to say that. I said, really? In a real English accent to the radio, and it didn't respond. Total information news in one and a half minutes, it peaked. It did what I have learned to appreciate actually, gave me the headline news. It gave me the most important things. And then somebody else, apparently somewhere else, was filling in the details. Haven't found them yet, but somebody must be doing it somewhere else on the radio. Total information news.

Now in a sense that's what the Bible does for you. It gives you what you need to know. It headlines. But unless you peek around the corner of the verse, you'll never find the culture of it. For example, you need to ask the text questions every time you open your Bible or you'll soon quit reading the Bible. For example, did Mrs. Noah like animals? Have you ever wondered that? You say no, Jill, I really haven't. And it seems to be quite irrelevant to everything else. But unless you ask those sort of questions and then sit back and dream, I mean, did she? Well, the Bible doesn't say so, so we shouldn't wonder. No, no, no. You must wonder. I mean, that could

be very important. You say. Well, of course she liked animals. God wouldn't shut her up in a zoo if she didn't like animals, wouldn't he?

Do missionaries like bugs? Well, of course, missionaries love bugs. God wouldn't send them to be a missionary if they didn't love bugs. Oh, no. Missionaries don't like bugs. They're like you and me. So you need to ask the questions. And my question was how how how what did God do? Well, God had been sufficient in his past. God would be sufficient in his future, and God was sufficient in his presence. Jesus was there. This is a theophony, a self-revelation of God. This is the angel of the Lord. Some believe the second person of the Trinity himself. They cooked Elijah breakfast. Cooked him breakfast. Have you ever wondered what it tasted like? You should. I have no idea, but I'm happy to spend a minute or two wondering. It certainly had enough energy in whatever it was that God cooked him to take him on 40 days and 40 nights when he was totally, utterly exhausted.

I'd love to know what it tasted like. And, you know, at the low points in my life and in the ministry that God has privileged Stuart and I with. Many, many times I have been flat on my face under a broom tree. I, too, am an A type personality like Elijah. I run when I could walk.

Remember when he came back down from the mountain after praying and seeing the heavens open and he said to Ahab, Get yourself home. It's going to rain and your chariot wheels will get stuck in the mud if you don't. And then he ran. Where? In front of the chariot. Why didn't he run behind? Because he was Elijah. Why didn't he accept a lift? A ride? Because he was Elijah.

Do you run when you can walk? Then you're probably like Elijah. You're an A type and A types find themselves overextending, hard on themselves, and often flat on their face under their broom tree. So there are many reasons we find himself there. But I want to point out something that when you get there, God is not going to clobber you for being there. You'll lose your perspective of God. Many times I go home and I'm flat on my face and I sort of see God in the corner of my bedroom with a great big stick with ministry written on it. And he's saying to me, Jill, you stupid poop prophet. Get up and minister minister, minister, share the four spiritual laws with Jezebel, you know, whatever.

But you know God doesn't do that. He doesn't do that. He touches us at those low points. And he says the journey is too great for thee, and that's what breaks me up. That's what makes me Bigger folks. It's able to realize that God is not angry with me when I blow it. Failure is never final for the Christian. God is just concerned. For example, in the story of Jonah about Jonah's anger. His prophet, who is out of sorts as he is with Nineveh and the heathen he's trying to reach. God is concerned with us, and he touches us at the low points of our lives. Elijah had been stupid enough to leave his servant behind him and that's what we'll do when we get flat in our face under the broom trees. We'll leave behind us anybody that could help us.

If you are out of sorts with God, not only are you tired of the work of the Lord but of the Lord of the work, you will not want anyone around you who is a bright, shiny, victorious Christian at this point. You'll keep them at arm's length, right? You'll sit on the back instead of at the front, where people say the greatest blessings are. You'll just keep out of reach because you don't need a clever little Bible verse. You don't need an encouraging word. You don't need somebody that's

living in victory when you're living in defeat to be around. And I don't know quite why Elijah left his servant behind him. Maybe he just pooped out. They'd run a marathon incidentally from Carmel all the way to the gates of Jezreel, and then he'd run into the desert and maybe the poor servant who was trying to keep up with him was dying. I don't know.

But he'd left him behind. And I'd like to say, don't do that. Do you know how many servants there are here that would love to minister to you? In fact, when Elijah left his servant behind, God ended up having to give him a new one. Because you can't really do without your servants. You can't do without your brothers and your sisters that are saying, I don't happen to be lying flat on my face under a broom tree. You need me at this point. Let me help you. But you don't want that. You want to isolate and you get to this point of desperation where you say, take away my life, the death wish.

Do Christians get into situations like that? Oh, yes. Do Christians in ministry? Oh, yes. When are they, carnal? Are they in sin? Elijah wasn't. This was at the top, not at the bottom. This is when he was being faithful, not when he was being unfaithful. This is when everything was good, too much good stuff at those points. This is just after you've led someone to Christ. This is when you've seen a prayer answered. This is when God is really alive in your life and you're saying it's never been better than today. Watch out.

Listen to what Karen teaches about how the old devil waits for us and kicks us when we're down. Not when we're up and when we're up, not when we're down. He's just waiting for the highs and the lows. Doesn't bother much when we're sort of just going on and on and on. But he loves the

highs, and he loves the lows. And here he is. God touches him. He cooks him breakfast. You know I've never ever had but one experience where I've had many experiences, but one that I think of specifically of Jesus cooking me breakfast. I was doing a tour of ministry around some ladies groups down in the south, and it had been one of those tours when I think it had ten straight days with meetings every day in different places.

And every time I wanted to eat, I was on a plane and it was peanuts. So I had eaten peanuts for about a week because I never got there early enough or late enough to have a meal. And I was very keen on peanuts. I was chattering a lot, but I was very, very keen on it. And I got to this place at midnight. The plane was late. The people picking me up thought I was coming the next morning, so they weren't there. And that was all right. I knew where to go. I arrived at the conference center. It was Ben Lippen. Actually, I knew where the kitchen was and I knew where I would be staying. And I went to the kitchen thinking if I could just get something to eat, I think I just don't think I can go on like this.

Because I was physically exhausted, I was flat on my face under the broom tree. Sometimes there's nothing more than you just need God to hear, say to you, Sleep. It's all right. I give you permission. Just have a rest. Do something. Smell the flowers, you know. It's all right. Listen to music. I was at that point. And I looked through the kitchen window, which was all glass and the place was locked and I saw all the breakfast laid out on the table and I thought, I wonder if Christians are allowed to break windows and things like that. But I've got to get some food God, and I was rattling the door and there was no one around. Well, I couldn't get in and I sat there looking at that food drooling.

And as I sat there, I said, Lord, I'm going to pray, a prayer that I go all over the world, telling people never to pray. Do you know what I'd really love just now? I'd love a peach. Now, that was a stupid prayer. And I giggle to myself. I said, I've just got this yearning for a peach. And then I laughed and I said, okay, in the morning, I'll get breakfast in the morning and taking one last long look, I turned around. I went to my little speaker's cabin, and there on the doorstep was a basket of peaches. It has never happened to me before or since. I've had baskets of fruit in my room. Yes, but never a whole beautiful basket of peaches. Jesus cooked me breakfast and it touched me so much.

The weird thing about that was nobody ever knew who gave me the peaches. I spent the whole time I was there the two days asking who gave me the peaches? What peaches? Peaches that were on my step. I don't know. Did you give the peaches? No, I didn't. Was a Shepherd? Shepherd, did you give the peaches? No, I just arrived the next day. Nobody could ever find out and I'm not making anything of that at all. Somebody gave me peaches. Maybe an angel [inaudible], maybe a person who was an angel in human form to me. But I tell you, it touched me.

Jesus is so loving. His loving touch in our desert. Look around. It might be the girl that knocks on your door when you're flat on your face that God wants to. You've got to let her cook your breakfast. You've got to take those loving touches. It's not going to be a miracle. It's going to be a very practical thing that God reminds you through. I love you, girl. I am not angry with you. I want you to know that. Arise and eat. The journey is too great for you.

And in the strength of that food, you'll go on another 40 days and 40 nights. Your soul will get bigger. I once heard Alan Redpaths say There is no limit to the capacity of how God can stretch your soul. And I've never forgotten it. You can never sort of get full up. Arrive. Be there.

Because your soul is ever expanding. If you want to use the picture. And the Lord touched Elijah, I've ever only ever been in one deep hole like that in my life. That was just before we came to America. And I was sat in my face in no uncertain terms. In fact, I was in hospital with a bleeding ulcer and migraine headaches. So my body was telling me what was happening to the rest of me at that point. And I'd had it up to here with the mission that we served with the church of Jesus Christ with our particular ministry in it.

And I wanted out, in fact, because they couldn't find the bleeding elsewhere and I was getting worse and worse and really very seriously ill, I thought that's the way I was going. I also believed I deserved it. And I've never been there before. And that is a very deep hole to be. And I believed seeing we were about to immigrate in two weeks time to America, take up a new ministry that God was going to take me out of the way because I had failed as a missionary wife. And God will give my husband a new wife who could do the job better than me. Now, this is not a pastor's conference, but whenever I share that story, which I don't do too often, I have pastor's wives come up to me and say, I've been there.

I want so badly to be the wife my husband needs. But I am such a failure. I just can't be this ministry wife. And I think it would be better for him if I was out of the way. It's a very deep hole to find yourself in. And, you know, Jesus touched me in so many ways, practically through his servants. He put me in a hospital bed so I couldn't run away like Elijah did and keep myself out

of the reach of servants. God touched me through them, and he cooked me breakfast. Elijah went to the cave as you know. He went to Horeb. Ask, Why? Don't just read it. Why Horeb? Well, you have to study the whole story to try and figure out some reasons, and you might be right and you might be wrong. And let me say one other thing about Bible study. It doesn't matter if you get the wrong answer.

You know I spend my time in America telling you it's all right. All your books of Bible study have the right answers for you or make sure that you find the right answers. Do you know the study I love more than anything else? I don't think too many people use it over here. [inaudible] search the Scriptures because it doesn't give you any answers. So it doesn't matter if you get the wrong answer. One reason we don't do Bible study is we're so scared we get the wrong answer. It's all right. How do you know whether it's right or wrong? It doesn't matter. What God wants you to do is work. Get these little dust minds of ours and expand them and say, Maybe this. Maybe that. Why Horeb? Now, I don't know whether this is the right answer or not. But I'll tell you what I came up with.

Maybe he went to Horeb because that's where Moses met God in the burning bush. The water came from the rock, and Israel's point of greatest failure happened there, the golden calf. Maybe, maybe not. But maybe he wanted to go back to his roots. And I want to say something when you're in a hole or you're flat on your face under your broom tree, go back to your roots. What do you know of God? That's going to be the stepping stone that helps you climb out of the hole. What do you know of God? And maybe Elijah sat on his mountain and he said, oh, brother Moses, if you could be here, if you could only be here now? Maybe you tell me what it was like

to be a murderer on the run from Pharaoh, feeling you'd failed when God had given you all that training, your palace training and brought you up to be the deliverer of Israel and what you do, you blew it and you ended up 40 years backside of the desert with a few scraggy sheep.

What did you feel like, Moses? I am sitting here in the very place that happened. Oh, if you're only here to encourage me, maybe he went back to his roots to think about what God did for Moses. Maybe he thought about the water from the rock, which speaks of the spirit and the incredible provision that God has given us. Maybe that's what he needed to be reminded of. Or maybe he needed to be reminded of the golden calf. And how God turned Israel away and sent them on into the Promised Land after he dealt with him. I don't know why he went to Horeb, but I know it was at Horeb that God said to him, okay, Enough is enough. You've had your rest. I will not allow you to retire in a holy hill in a cave. I've still work for you to do. Go back the way you came. You left one servant behind.

There's another one down in the valley. His name's Elijah. I've got it all set for you. Let's go. Let's go. And Elijah, it says, went on from there. And if you like, if you've really had a bad failure in your life, you can stay flat on your face under your broom tree if you wish for the rest of your life. Our pews are full of people like that. I think of one man in our church who was obviously gifted and talented and sat on the back row for a few months and we got to know him and found that he had been a leading elder in another church, but the church had had a terrible mess, a bad split. He'd had it up to here with the church and decided to leave the church, join another one and never get involved again in his life.

And my husband said to him, you can sit on the back pew for a year, Virgil. That's fine. But after that, if you haven't found God's loving, healing touch in your life, I want you to get out and give your seat to somebody else that does want to do God's will. Virgil Staples is now on our staff in charge of pastoral ministries. Has been for five or ten years, but he sat on the back row in his holy hill, and he said, I'll just stay here for the rest of my life. And God said no you won't. You go back down the mountain. I've got things for you to do. Things for you to do. Failure is never final for the Christian. Don't pout. Don't sit there saying I only I am left. The funny thing is, when you are flat on your face under the broom tree, you'd think you'd be humble?

I'm going to talk about humility in the next session. You'd think you'd be humble, wouldn't you? But funnily enough, it sort of inverts on you and you get all self-righteous. Inverted pride. And Elijah was saying, I only I am left. I'm the only spiritual one in Israel. I meet a lot of ladies like that sometimes when I'm working with ladies in churches. I am the only spiritual lady in this whole church. I'm the only one that cares about prayer and Bible study. The rest of them are into this and that and the other. But I only I am left. And I usually say to them what God said to Elijah. Nonsense. Who do you think you are? 7000 just like you down there. What makes you think you're so special? Of course you're not the only one left. I've got 7000 that haven't bowed their knee to Baal. So watch it. Don't get so sorry for yourself.

You can't hear the still small voice of God. And the still small voice will say to you, Elijah, go back the way you came. So where are you? Do you know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever? Or do you just know that Jesus Christ was sufficient in your past? Yesterday will be sufficient in your tomorrows. But today is a pretty bad day. Then maybe we start this

conference with the thought. Listen up, listen up. Equipped to do His will. You cannot do His will if you're running on empty. And if you're running on empty because you're burned out nothing wrong in your life. Everything right. And yet you're still there.

Then open up. And I would challenge you right now to say like that little four year old God make me bigger, bigger. And I almost shiver when I challenge you to say that. That's a scary prayer to pray folks, because God always hears it and always answers. Let's pray together. Oh, Lord God. So many words, almost like Mozart. Amadeus. Too many notes. Take the words that make sense that are real that are living and apply them to the hearts you see need them desperately. And I pray for any young person here or older person who is flat on his face, her face under a broom tree, wishing it would all go away, wishing they could be out of it.

They're saying I've had it Lord. Lord, I pray for them right now. You see them, you know them. And I pray that whatever it takes to touch them in their desert, you'll do it even this week. May we be for the other true servants. May we cook breakfast this week for someone. May we do the loving, practical thing that will remind that person in concrete form of how much you love them. Oh, God, hear our prayer and let our cry come unto thee. Amen. You're dismissed.

[musical interlude]