

Free to Rest



SABBATH—AUGUST 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Mark 2:1–12; 1 Kings 18; 1 Kings 19:1–8; Psalm 34:18; Matthew 5:1–3; Psalm 73:26.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD is my light, and he saves me. Why should I fear anyone? The LORD is my place of safety. Why should I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1, NIV).

JESUS met many sick and dying people during His time on earth. Crowds of people came to Jesus for healing and rest from pain. Jesus always healed them and gave them rest.

Sometimes Jesus just said a word to heal someone. Or Jesus touched a sick person and healed him or her in an instant. Other times Jesus sent the sick person away. Then the person was healed on the way home. Jesus healed men, women, and children, Jews, non-Jews, and rich people. He also healed poor people nobody cared about. The worst diseases and problems were no match for Jesus. He healed people born blind. He healed lepers. Lepers were people with an awful skin disease. In the time of Jesus, lepers lived far away from healthy people. When lepers came into a town, they cried, “Not clean! Not clean!” to warn people to stay away. Jesus also healed the only disease worse than leprosy at that time: death.

This week, we look at two different examples of healing: (1) a man too sick to come to Jesus on his own, and (2) a man who looks healthy but needs healing.

We also will ask, What happens when God does not answer our prayers for healing the way we expect? How do we find rest then?



When lepers came into a town, they cried, “Not clean! Not clean!” to warn people to stay away.

HEALING REST (Mark 2:1–4)

When we are sick, we need rest more than ever. We need to rest our bodies so that we can fully heal.

We often need to rest our minds, too. Sometimes we get sick with something that does not put our life in danger. Maybe we have a cold or a bad headache. We lie in bed and try not to think about all the things we should be doing but cannot do.

Sometimes we are sick with something that can cause us to die. Often, then, we lie awake and worry about the medical tests. We may start to wonder, “Why is this happening?” Are we suffering because of our bad habits and a lifestyle that is not healthful? Was it the drugs we took 20 years ago? Are we sick because of the extra weight we put on our bodies a few years ago? Or is God punishing us for that secret sin we do that no one else knows about?

Read Mark 2:1–4. What is happening in these verses?

The man in this story cannot move his arms or legs. In *The Desire of Ages*, pages 267–271, we learn why. The man did some wrong things in his past that he is ashamed about. His sins caused his disease. The doctors cannot cure him.

We often blame ourselves and the things we did in the past for the bad things that happen in our lives now. But our blaming ourselves or other people does not heal us or make us whole.

The plan of God for our lives never included pain, disease, or suffering. Sickness came to this planet because of sin. God gives us important health rules to follow. These rules can help us to enjoy a better life now.

The good news is that God can give us rest if we are sick or healthy. God can give us rest even if we caused our own sickness. God can give us rest even if our parents did not take good care of us when we were children. God can give us rest even if we were born with something that medical science or doctors cannot fix. God knows how to give us rest.

When someone gets sick, do not start blaming anyone or anything for the sickness. At the same time, why can our understanding the cause of the sickness often help us as we try to get better?



God gives us important health rules to follow. These rules can help us to enjoy a better life now.

HEALING THE CAUSE (Mark 2:5–12)

The man who cannot move his arms or legs has four friends. These four friends rip open the rooftop of the house where Jesus is visiting. Then the four men lower their sick friend down to Jesus. Will Jesus heal this awful sinner? Will He say the word to heal the man?



The four men lower their sick friend down to Jesus.

How does Jesus heal the man? What is the first thing Jesus does for him? For the answers, read Mark 2:5–12.

We often do not know we are sick until our bodies show signs of disease. Many times, we think these signs are the same as the sickness itself. We think if we get rid of the signs, we will be healed. Jesus has a different way of looking at disease. He knows the real cause for all suffering. So, He wants to heal the cause first.

In the story about the man who cannot move his arms or legs, Jesus does not heal the signs of the disease right away. Jesus first heals the heart. The man feels his guilt deeply. The guilt crushes him. The man feels his separation from God more deeply than he feels his disease. When a person rests in God, he or she can put up with any amount of pain or suffering. So, Jesus goes to the “root” of the disease and offers the man forgiveness first.

The religious leaders are surprised when Jesus forgives the man. Only God can forgive sins. Who does Jesus think He is? Jesus hears the angry questions in their hearts. In answer, Jesus asks the leaders a question.

Read Mark 2:8, 9. What question does Jesus ask the religious leaders? What problem in their hearts does Jesus really want them to see?

We cannot see forgiveness. But when we look at the Cross, we see how much forgiveness cost. Forgiveness cost God the life of His Son. Jesus shows that forgiveness is real when He chooses to heal the sick man.

God wants to heal us first on the inside, too. Then sometimes He may choose to heal our bodies. Other times, we may have to wait until Jesus comes back. Our Savior wants us to rest in His love and forgiveness until that time.

How can we find rest and peace when God does not answer our prayers for healing as we expect?

RUNNING AWAY (1 Kings 18)

Do you know what the number one sickness is world-wide? A sad heart and mind. Being sad is not a sin. A sad heart does not mean that a person has no faith or does not trust in God.

Sometimes our being sad can happen slowly. Sometimes we can become sad fast after something awful happens. That is just what happened to Elijah after his experience on Mount Carmel. The story about Elijah shows us how someone can feel down and tired very fast after something big happens in life.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah has just seen a big miracle. God sends fire from heaven. God also answers the prayer of Elijah for rain after there was no rain for three years. Then Jezebel makes a threat against Elijah. Why does Elijah run from Jezebel after all the big miracles he sees? For the answers, read 1 Kings 19:1–5.

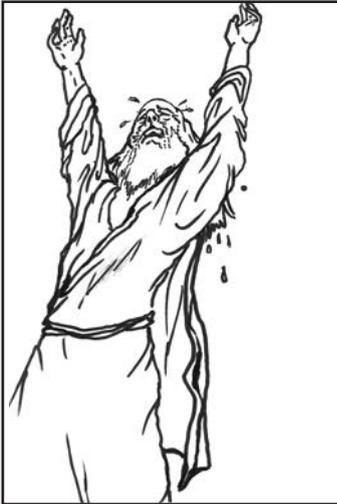
The last 24 hours have been very hard and tiring for Elijah. This difficult experience and the threat from Jezebel cause Elijah to feel very sad. Let us also remember that Elijah is there when the 850 messengers from Baal are killed (1 Kings 18:19, 40). Elijah may have even killed some of them himself. For sure, this experience can cause a lot of stress for the person who must watch or, even worse, take part in it.

So, Elijah starts to run. He tries to get away. Sometimes we are the same as Elijah. We run when things get bad. We may run to the refrigerator. Then we try to make ourselves happy by eating. Sometimes we try to sleep our problems away. Sometimes we look for someone new to love. Or a new job or a new place to live. Sometimes we work more than we should. Some people use medicine to try to dull the pain they feel. We do all these things to try to run away from the problems that are stealing our rest from our hearts. In the end, all these only hide the real problem. They do not solve it. Often, the things we do to run from our problems only make our problems worse.



Elijah has just seen a big miracle. God sends fire from heaven.

TOO TIRED TO RUN (1 Kings 19:4)



When Elijah stops running, he feels guilt.

Elijah is too tired to run anymore. So, he prays. His prayer is different from the one he prayed on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:36, 37) in front of the religious leaders, the messengers of Baal, the members of the government, and the people. This prayer is simple, short, and without hope.

In 1 Kings 19:4, Elijah says that he is no better than his past family members. What is he talking about?

When Elijah stops running, he feels guilt. Then he sees that his running away has caused Israel to lose a wonderful chance to change their lives for the better. Elijah has let people down who need him. He is helpless to do anything about it. He sees himself as he really is.

We all have times in our life the same as Elijah. Seeing yourself as you really are is a painful experience. So, we should be thankful for the Bible promise in Philippians 3:9. Our faith in Jesus will make us right with God. When we are in Jesus, God will see us as He sees Jesus. This promise gives us all the hope we ever need.

At the same time, we need to be honest and say that life is hard. A sad heart can fill us with hate for ourselves. Sometimes we start to think that dying is the only way out.

Elijah feels this way. His troubles are a heavy load. They are too much for him to carry in his heart on his own. That is why he says, “ ‘I have had enough, LORD! Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors [family members from the past]’ ” (1 Kings 19:4, ERV).

The good news is that God does not get angry at Elijah. God understands our experience when we fight against the sad feelings in our hearts.

“Maybe you have no proof right now that the Savior is looking at you in love. But He is. You may not feel His touch. But His hand is on you in love and tender pity.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 97, adapted.

God knows we are not strong enough on our own (1 Kings 19:7) to do what He asks. But sometimes God must wait for us to stop running before He can help us.

Read Psalm 34:18; Matthew 5:1–3; Psalm 73:26; and Isaiah 53:4–6. What hope and comfort do these verses give you?

REST AND MORE (1 Kings 19:5–8)

God knows Elijah is tired from running. God also knows that Elijah feels more than just worn out in his body. The heart of Elijah needs to rest, too. Elijah is carrying a heavy load of guilt. God forgives Elijah and gives him rest. Finally, Elijah can really sleep and feel refreshed.

Maybe we think this should be the end of the story. But it is not. The rest God gives us is more than just sleep for our tired bodies. The rest God gives us is healing for our hearts. God does not rush this healing.

Where is Elijah going now? Read 1 Kings 19:5–8 for the answer.

After Elijah rests, what does he do? He starts running again! But this time, God is in charge of where Elijah runs. God understands that we live on an earth filled with sin. So, life can cause us to feel sad. A sad heart can cause us to run away from all our troubles. But God wants to help us run in the right direction. He wants us to run to Him. When we run to God, He will teach us to obey His “quiet, gentle voice” (1 Kings 19:12, ERV). This voice is His voice talking to our hearts. When we obey the voice of God, we will find rest.

Elijah lies under a tree and wants to die. He feels his best days are over. Elijah has no energy to get up and make the trip to meet God. So, God gives Elijah the energy he needs. God also can give us a better tomorrow.

What surprise does God have planned for Elijah? For the answer, read 1 Kings 19:15, 16 and 2 Kings 2:11.

God knows that better days are ahead for Elijah. Healing will come for Elijah when he learns to live by the rules of God and to accept His rest. Elijah still has some work on earth to do for God. God also knows that Elijah will call fire down from heaven again (2 Kings 1:10). Elijah will not die with no hope under a tree. He will ride in a war cart made of fire. This flying cart will take him to heaven where he will rest with God forever.

How does the story about Elijah teach you to rest in God even when you feel your worst? How does this story teach you not to give up hope?



Elijah lies under a tree and wants to die. He feels his best days are over.



“We will pass from the shadows and the dark into the sunshine that is a word picture for God Himself.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Life is always changing. These changes make us happy or very sad. But life changes in our experience have no power to change the way God feels about us. God does not change. He is the same today as He was yesterday. He will be the same tomorrow. God asks us to trust fully in His love and not to doubt Him.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, page 120, adapted.

“Continue to look to Jesus. Offer up silent prayers of faith to Him from your heart. Hold on to His strength. Maybe you do not have any proof He hears your prayers. Continue to pray anyway. Behave as if every prayer you offer Him reaches the throne of God and that God answers each one. His promises never fail. Go forward. Sing songs to God in your heart. Sing even when you are sad and weighed down. I tell you as someone who knows from experience: light from God will come. Joy will be ours. The fog and the clouds will disappear. We will pass from the shadows and the dark into the sunshine that is a word picture for God Himself.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pages 242, 243, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Often, we have a hard time knowing how to help people who feel very sad in heart and mind. What can your church learn to do to help people who suffer from this disease?
- ② We often try hard to be open and honest with God. Read some of the psalms to see how the Bible writers shared their feelings with God. How can we encourage members in our local churches to be this honest with God and each other?
- ③ Prayer is often hard when we feel very sad. Talk about the need for us to pray for people who cannot pray to God on their own.
- ④ Why must we remember that faith is not feeling? Maybe we are feeling very sad, afraid, worried, or that we have no hope. These feelings do not mean that we have no faith or trust in God. Why must we remember that showing faith in God during our hard times is so important?
- ⑤ Many of us suffer from disease caused by our poor lifestyle choices. What hope do you get from the story in Mark 2 about the man who cannot move his arms or legs?

BETTER THAN TOYS

Several friends crowded around Mariah at school on Monday.

“What are you doing after school, Mariah?” One friend asked.

“Can we come to your house to play?” another friend asked.

Mariah shook her head. “I have so much to do today,” she said.

Nine-year-old Mariah was a very busy girl. She lived in Pond Inlet, a small town located on a faraway island in the Canadian Arctic. Every weekday, Mariah went to school. Then she came home and did her homework. She also helped her parents around the house. Then on Sabbath, her family read the Bible and watched sermons at home.

But the friends of Mariah really wanted to play with her. On Tuesday and Wednesday, the children crowded around her again and asked if she was free to play after school. But Mariah was busy both days. Then her friends came to her on Thursday and Friday. Mariah was busy those days, too. “But when can we come to your house to play?” a friend asked. “How about Saturday?”

Mariah did have free time on Saturday. “You can come over to my house and join our Bible study on Saturday,” Mariah said.

Her friends looked confused. They never read the Bible. But they wanted to spend time with Mariah. So, they agreed to come.

On Sabbath, a few friends came to see Mariah. Mariah read from the Bible. Her friends never heard about the God of the Bible. They watched a sermon. They asked Mariah to explain the sermon. “What did that man mean?” one friend asked.

The children asked many questions. Mariah did her best to explain the sermon to her friends.

At school on Monday, other students asked those who visited Mariah what they did at her house on Saturday. “We read about God in the Bible,” one child said.

“And we watched an interesting sermon,” another child answered.

The friends who spent time with Mariah on Sabbath explained what they learned. Mariah smiled as she heard them talk about God. She felt so good! The feeling she got from sharing Jesus with her friends was better than playing with toys. She wanted her friends to come to her home every Sabbath to learn about Jesus.

Part of the 13th Sabbath Offering this quarter will help open a church and community center in the Nunavut area of Canada, where Mariah lives. Thank you for giving an offering.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Mariah read to her friends from the Bible.

