

I. Introduction

- A. Though he finished high school as a star athlete, when he accepted the scholarship to a Division 1 School, he showed up as the eighth-string quarterback. He wasn't happy, but he went to work.
- B. Seven other QBs stood between him and his dream... he was on what his coach called, "the hamburger squad." This was a collection of the team's least valuable players. Their main job was to run plays so the starting defense could practice beating them into a bloody pulp.
- C. Later on, he would talk about how hard those days were and how much he just wanted to quit.
- D. By the end of the semester, he planned to do exactly that. Quit.
- E. He called his dad and told him. He said, "Dad, the coaches don't know my name. I'm just a tackling dummy for the defense. It's horrible... I think I want to give up and come home."
- F. His dad told him this. "Son, you can quit... that's your choice. But you can't come home because I'm not going to live with a quitter. I love you, but you're not coming back here. Oh, and I believe in you."
- G. By the way, I should tell you that his dad had a nickname. It was the only name he went by. When I tell you, some of you may know who his son is, but don't say it out loud.
- H. His dad, who was a lawyer, went by the nickname Grit.
- I. And if you think he sounds harsh, you should know that this same son would say that his mom and dad were the most tender, and kind, and caring, and loving parents a kid could ever have. They didn't force him into stuff. They didn't try to live through him, or make him some kind of trophy for their glory. They let him be himself, and choose his own course. And they always supported him in everything except quitting.
- J. So, this QB stayed in the university program.
- K. He was first to show up and last to leave at practices. He shifted his workouts into overdrive. He saw a big net hanging at the far end of the field house, and started aiming the football at it. He took a snap from an imaginary center, did a three-step drop, set up, and fired a spiral into the net. In two months, he said, he must have thrown over 10,000 spirals. His arm killed him, but he wanted to be a starter.
- L. This is a series on Grit, in case you didn't remember.
- M. In his sophomore year, he moved up from number 8 to number 2.
- N. In his senior year, he started, and he was awarded as the most outstanding quarterback in the country.
- O. In the pros, he was named Most Valuable Player twice, and was also MVP of a winning Superbowl game in which he broke a record by throwing 6 touchdown passes. When he retired, he was the highest rated quarterback in football history.
- P. He played for the San Francisco 49ers — and this player whose father, Grit said he could quit but couldn't come home — this player's name is Steve Young.

II. What is G.R.I.T.

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood, and to part two of our summer series called G.R.I.T.
 - 1. Grace Revealed in Trials.
- B. We are talking about how to survive and thrive in a messed up world. We've said that this world is a giant pain machine. This fallen world is a morally corrupt pain machine, and you're stuck in it until you see Jesus face of face.
- C. So how to do you handle it? How do you face life's trials with dignity, poise, and grace?
- D. The answer is with Grit.
- E. What is Grit? Here's our definition:
 - 1. *G.R.I.T. is the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion and the faith to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.*
- F. Tyrants like fear. Tyrants like defeat and despair. Tyrants like evil people and evil rulers. Tyrants like your own failures, your own dysfunctions, your own addictions, and your own defeats. They've come to shrink you. To eat away at your sovereign soul.
- G. And it takes Grit to face them down.
 - 1. Grit is faith on steroids.
 - 2. It is trusting God when trusting God doesn't make sense.
 - 3. It is you having such a deep knowledge of God that you refuse to let the devil shrink him.
 - 4. Grit is you looking to the horizon of your life, and seeing the giants there — seeing the enemies, seeing the sickness, the dysfunction, the temptation, the debt, the mess that's coming your way... Grit means seeing all those giants, and then seeing the Grace of God on that same horizon, bigger than every giant, and more than ready to meet the foe.
 - a) It is how you reclaim your life's throne.
- H. Our example and our case study for Grit is a prophet of ancient Israel. His name was Elijah. A rough and rugged mountain man. He appeared from nowhere when Israel was at a low point. The worship of God was all but dead. The priests of God were hounded and killed. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel led the nation into a moral toilet, and into the worship of the false god named Baal (B-a-a-l). He was a harsh deity and his worship included infant sacrifice and sexual perversions.
- I. So here comes Elijah, to call out King Ahab... and to say that God's ancient Word could never be broken:
 - 1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (1 Kings 17:1, NKJV).*
- J. The minute Elijah faced down Ahab, he got a target painted on his back.
- K. Here's what happened next:
 - 1. *Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. "And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there..."*
 - 2. *So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:2-7, NKJV).*
- L. The place where God sent Elijah is uncertain. It is called the Brook Cherith. We can only guess where it is.
- M. But we don't have to guess what it was.
- N. It's called a brook in English, and that's what it was. But according to the Hebrew language here, it was a specific kind of brook. The people in that region called this kind of brook a *wadi* (w-a-d-i). Here in California, we would call it a seasonal creek. In a wadi, the water doesn't always run. It's erratic. It depends on the rain.
- O. These wadis were in steep crevices in the hillsides around the Jordan river. There were a bunch of them.
- P. Other streams would feed them. Other creeks would flow into them. But if the rain shut off, after a while, the wadi dried up.
- Q. Here is a man, banking his life on something all his experiences told him was uncertain and erratic and unsure.
- R. Will you think with me today about an aspect of Grit called Steadiness?

S. Steadiness means living an un-erratic life in an always erratic world. Elijah shows us four secrets of how that is done.

III. Four Secrets of Steadiness

A. Listen for the Voice of God

1. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying... (1 Kings 17:2)
2. So many Christians get this wrong, and the results are a mess for their lives, and for the mission of the church.
 - a) The Word of God is the Bible.
 - b) The Voice of God is the Bible, woven into your soul, applied to a situation in the heat of the moment.
3. If you do not weave the Word of God into your soul, over and over and over again... then you cannot hear well the voice of God. The two go together.
4. I always get jittery when I hear somebody say, "God told me."
5. How do you argue with that?
 - a) We had a lady who wanted us to baptize her two year old son. In our church, we baptize people who understand what baptism is and who choose it for themselves. It doesn't save a person. It doesn't wash away their sins. It's less like a wedding, and more like a wedding ring. Baptism happens after salvation, when you're willing to go public with your salvation.
 - b) But this lady was insistent on baptizing her two year old son.
 - c) She said, "God told me to have him baptized."
 - d) And I said, "God told me not to."
6. Listen, when two people lob two opposite God-told-me's into a conversation, which one will you listen to?
7. The one with the Bible on their side.
8. The voice of God only happens when the Word of God is woven into your heart. You have studied the Bible. You have read the Bible. You have memorized the Bible. You have learned the Bible.
9. Then, when a situation hits you, the Holy Spirit compiles the biblical truth you need, and shoves it back into your memory banks.
10. God has spoken in his Word, decisively, and with finality.
11. Why should God tell anybody a new Word who has already disrespected his old word? If I sent you a thousand letters, and you never opened them, why should I spend any time answering your latest question?
12. The Word of the Lord came to Elijah... we don't know how that happened. It might have been an impression. In those days at that time, it might have been audible. It might have been a picture formed in his mind. We don't know.
13. But we do know that Elijah knew his Bible. He knew God's Word, and when King Ahab painted a target on his back, the Word of the Lord came to him.
14. And it always does if you're even a little bit regular with Scripture. God is always comforting you with it. He is always guiding you with it. He is always whispering his still small voice. You're not left alone. You're not left to your own devices. It is not audible... it is an impression, a picture, a thought that seems to come from nowhere, but really came from Bible verses hidden in your heart, lifted up at the right moment by the Holy Spirit of God.
15. Grit is not a function of intelligence.
16. Grit is a function of regular, patient, systematic listening to the Word of God so that when trouble comes, you can actually discern the voice of God.
 - a) When it comes to G.R.I.T., biblical wisdom is more important than intelligence or education.
 - b) We are talking about Steadiness. The world is erratic enough. Either your emotions will respond to the erratic happenings around you, or they will respond to the inner oasis of peace and trust created by the Word of God.
 - (1) Let us not be children tossed to and fro...
 - (2) Let us be tough minded, God-guided people of Grit.
 - (a) Listen for the voice of God.

B. Bank on the Promise of God

1. "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. (1 Kings 17:3-5).
2. If I'm Elijah getting this message, I'm look at God, and saying, "What? Really?"
 - a) "I just told Ahab the rain is going to stop, and now you're telling me go to to a wadi, and we both know perfectly well that it's only a matter of time before it dries up? Really God?"
 - b) "And seriously, God, ravens? They're going to feed me? They're going to share their food with me? Haven't you ever heard of the word ravenous?"
3. The most basic way of building your faith is by trusting in the promises of God. Know them. Claim them. Follow the directions.
4. I gave you one promise last weekend... remember? Part of your G.R.I.T. Basic Training.
 - a) Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV)
 - (1) Did anybody write it down?
 - (2) Does anybody have it with them?
5. We call this a promise from God. There are thousands of them in the Bible. They are there for every situation you can imagine. There are promises for...
 - a) When you are tempted.
 - b) When you are tired.
 - c) When you are beaten down.
 - d) When you are afraid.
 - e) When you have opportunities.
 - f) When you have sickness.
 - g) When you have financial problems.
 - h) When you have loss.
 - (1) There's not a situation in your life where God does not have a promise to comfort you, to guide you, to strengthen you, and to help you.
6. We had the youth group at our house on Friday night. It was a blast. We set up a volleyball net on the grass for them. I haven't opened that thing up for a couple of years.

7. When I opened the box, there were about thirty nuts in there. Unopened pecans. Rattling in the cardboard box with the volleyball net.
8. I hate rodents, but let's not get sidetracked.
9. You need to store them up like a squirrel stores nuts.
 - a) When you are in trouble:
 - (1) *"Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22)*
 - b) When you are afraid:
 - (1) *The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalms 27:1)*
 - c) When you feel overwhelmed:
 - (1) *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. (Isaiah 43:2, NKJV).*
10. You need to bank on God's promises. To trust him. To stick your neck out. To believe that what God has said is true enough to act like it.
11. But you worry. You say, what if God doesn't keep his promise to me?
12. Here's something really important for you to understand.
13. When you boil it all down, God has made one, big, epic promise to one big epic person: God has made one great promise to the Lord Jesus Christ.
14. That one promise is simple: "I will bless you."
15. Our problem is it doesn't make our hearts skip a beat.
16. You have no idea how big that word blessing is.
 - a) I will enrich you.
 - b) I will crown you king of kings.
 - c) I will seat you on the throne of the cosmos.
 - d) I will exalt your name.
 - e) I will give you a people.
 - f) I will make your name great.
 - (1) God made one promise to one person, and all the other promises in the Bible are like spokes of a wheel radiating from this central hub.
 - (2) And the deep truth is this:
 - (a) *Every time God keeps a promise to you, he is really keeping the Promise he made to Christ.*
 - i) You can bank on it.
17. Elijah, go to the wadi.
18. Elijah, wait for the ravens.
19. And Elijah went and did according to the word of the Lord.
 - a) When it comes to G.R.I.T., showing up is more important than talent.
 - (1) Ask Steve Young.
 - (2) So what happened?

C. *Feast on the Provision of God*

1. *The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. (1 Kings 17:6)*
2. There is blessing in your life, if you are a Christian.
3. Yes, there is pain in your life too, because we're all stuck inside the pain machine.
4. But there is blessing your life too.
 - a) There is provision.
 - b) There's a shirt on your back.
 - c) There are shoes on your feet.
 - d) There are a few coins rattling in your pocket.
 - e) There are some wits left inside your head.
 - f) There are people who care about you on your right and on your left.
 - g) If you have God in your life, God has blessing in your life, no exceptions.
5. The only question is what will you magnify? What will you zoom in on?
 - a) Will you magnify the blessings you have or the blessings you wish you had?
 - b) Will you magnify the blessings you have or the problems you face?
 - c) Will you magnify the blessings of the moment or the losses of the past?
 - (1) The devil has come, the Bible says, to steal, kill, and destroy. He's chewing at the corners of your dominion. He's trying to usurp your throne. He's trying to control your emotions and pull your strings. He's gnawing away at you. I'm not making this up:
 - (a) *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8, NKJV).*
 - (2) You have to push him back.
 - (3) But how?
6. By feasting on the provision of God. By making a bigger deal of the blessings you have than of the blessings you don't.
7. This is GRIT. This is grace revealed in trials.
8. There's a great illustration in the Old Testament.
 - a) The Jews come to the promised land. One year's journey from Egypt. God says, "Go, enjoy the land."
 - b) The people say, "Not so fast." They send in 12 spies.
 - c) The spies come back and report.
 - d) Ten spies issue this report:
 - (1) Great land, they say. Awesome land.
 - e) Everybody cheers.
 - (1) But then they add the bad news. There are giants in the land, and we are grasshoppers in their sight.
 - f) Two spies issue this report:
 - (1) Great land, and yeah there are giants, but we can whip them.

- g) Two groups of people looking at the exact same thing, reaching opposite conclusions. Same land. Same data. Same reality. Opposite conclusions.
- h) Why?
- i) The ten spies focused on the problem.
- j) The two spies focused on the blessing.
- k) Unfortunately, the majority ruled, and for forty years, they wandered in the wilderness... because they refused to sit down and feast on God's provision.
 - (1) They'd rather freak out.
- 9. It takes G.R.I.T. to say,
 - a) *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. (Psalms 23:5)*
- 10. Yeah, the enemies are still there, but so what?
 - a) Because when it comes to G.R.I.T., tenacity toward God is more important than a comfortable ride to heaven.
- 11. It has greater reward.
- 12. So we're talking about steadiness as an aspect of Grit.
 - a) Listen for the voice of God.
 - b) Bank on the promises of God.
 - c) Feast on the provisions of God.
 - (1) And here's the last quality.

D. *Yield to the Timing of God.*

- 1. *And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:7)*
- 2. Was God messing with him? No.
- 3. Was God out to get him? No.
- 4. Why did the brook dry up?
- 5. Because that's what happens to that kind of brook when the rain stops falling.
- 6. But you say, wait a minute. God sent him there. God provided for him there. Why wouldn't God just keep the water flowing? He's certainly able to do that. He does a miracle with the ravens, why can't he do a miracle with the wadi?
- 7. Why did God let the brook dry up?
- 8. Answer: because it was time for the next thing.
- 9. Elijah doesn't know it, but a few towns over, there's this widow who's about to starve to death. And later on her son will face unspeakable tragedy. And it's time for the next thing.
- 10. So when the brook dries up, God doesn't intervene.
- 11. Grit yields to the timing of God.
 - a) Joseph, why are you still in prison?
 - b) Daniel, why are you still in Babylon?
 - c) Steve Young, why are you still second string?
 - (1) Timing, timing, timing.
- 12. Is there anybody you know whose timing all went according to schedule?
- 13. Daniel said:
 - a) *And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. (Daniel 2:21, NKJV).*
- 14. Listen, I think that brook dried up because that brook dried up. It was a problem for Elijah. But I don't think that God directly caused it. Ultimately, he's the cause of all things, but not directly. Why did the brook dry up?
 - a) Because the rain dried up.
 - b) Why did the rain dry up?
 - c) Because the people have forsaken their God.
 - d) Why did the people forsake their God?
 - e) Because their despicable leaders led them down the toilet.
 - f) Why did the brook dry up?
 - (1) Because this fallen world is a morally corrupt pain machine. Bad things happen and we're stuck in it. Don't blame God.
- 15. But don't doubt God either. He can bring good out of bad. He's the only one who can.
- 16. And even though the timing seems random, and even though dark forces are lining up against you...
- 17. The devil's timing can never thwart the perfect plan of God.
- 18. In the school of G.R.I.T., adaptability matters, because any time is a great time for grace to break through.

IV. G.R.I.T. Basic Training

- A. Here's another verse to print out and carry with you. It's more difficult than last week's, but let's be tough. Gritty.
 - 1. *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; (Psalms 46:1, 2, NKJV).*
- B. Write it out.
- C. Print it.
- D. Read it during your trial.
- E. And then panic or whatever you're going to do.
- F. May God make us steady as we walk daily with him.