



## Series Introduction

### Are You Truly Living a Sustainable Life?

(Mother's Day Version)

May 8, 2022

**Annual Question:** What is the truth you are running from? (**MY MOM WOULD NOT LET ME RUN**)

**Sustainable Defined:** Something that can be maintained at a certain rate or level (Oxford Dictionary)

**Today's Big Question:** Is what you are currently doing sustainable? (**This Was My Mom's Main Goal**)

**Balance Thought:** Some things should only be sustained for a season and then overhauled

**Statement:** In the book of Genesis, God established a sustainable plan

- Genesis 1:30–31 (NKJV): 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

**Question:** Would you describe your current life direction as good and sustainable?

#### Four Things That Are Not Sustainable (**I Saw This in My Mom's Life**)

1. **Growth Without Decline** (Ecclesiastes 3, Managing the Up's and Downs)
2. **Economic Success Without a Decline** (You must manage both)
3. **Hope Deferred** (Proverbs 13:12, Managing Disappointment)
4. **Lies That Hide the Truth** (Luke 8:17-18, Managing Lies that can Deceive You)
  - For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."



## **Are You Living a Sustainable Life (Part One)**

**(Managing the UPs and the Downs Before They Manage You)**

**Sustainable Defined:** Something that can be maintained at a certain rate or level (Oxford Dictionary)

**Big Question:** Is what you are currently doing sustainable?

**Part 1: The Truth About the UPs and Downs to Come**

**Statement: Growth Without Decline Is Not Sustainable**

**Big Thought: What is your plan for seasons of growth and decline?**

1. Birth and death
2. Plant and uproot
3. Kill and heal
4. Tear down and build
5. Weep and laugh
6. Morn and dance
7. Scatter and gather
8. Embrace and stop embracing
9. Search and give up
10. Keep and throw away
11. Tear and mend
12. Silence and speaking
13. Loving and hating
14. War and peace

**Question:** How well do you balance these different seasons?

## I. The Emotional Challenge of Growth

- A. Moses had to manage **the emotional side** of growth
- B. Jethro helped him manage **the practical side** of growth

### Summary: Exchange Between Moses and Jethro: Exodus 18:13-24

13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?”

15 Moses answered him, “Because the people come to me to seek God’s will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and instructions.”

17 Moses’ father-in-law replied, “What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. 21 But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.”

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.

## II. The Emotional Challenge of Decline (Elijah’s Decline)

- A. Elijah had to manage **the emotional challenges** of his declining comfort
- B. God helped him **properly place his emotional challenges**

1 Kings 19:1–5 (NIV): Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 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 that of one of them.”

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

**Note: The Negative Perspective Elijah Developed**

**A. Elijah Loses Hope (1 Kings 19:9–10)**

- And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

**Note: Elijah Repeats His Concerns (1 Kings 19:13–15)**

- Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."
- 15 The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram."

### **III. God's Response To Elijah's**

#### **Emotional Decline**

1 Kings 19:17–18 (NIV): 18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

**Closing: Three Closing Observations**

**1. My Personal Challenges With Growth**

- A. I have struggled with the administrative demands
- B. I have struggled with the prosperity guilt
- C. I have struggled with being different at times

**2. My Personal Challenge With Seasons of Decline**

- A. Decline painfully stretched my vision and forced me to reassess change
- B. Decline painfully forced me to fight alone and ignore the crowd

### 3. A Final Closing Observation

- Religious people like the Pharisees have trouble changing and adapting to decline. They expected to grow forever. They hated Jesus because he was growing in influence, and they were decreasing.

**Note: John 7:45–47 (NIV):**

- 45 Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “**Why didn’t you bring him in?**” 46 “**No one ever spoke the way this man does,**” the guards replied. 47 “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted.

**Question:** What is your plan for **growing** and **declining**?

**Final Thought:** It is a trap for me to not plan for both in my future. I have been growing and still see opportunities to grow. But, just like John the Baptist so wisely said at some point,

- **John 3:30 (NIV):** 30 He must become greater; I must become less.” (The king James says, “He must increase and I must decrease.”)

**Next Time: The Truth About Economic Success and Decline**

**Read Ahead: 2 Kings 4:1-7**