



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

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## The mournful cry and joyful shout

Gospel According to "The Full Monty"

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:11-13

*The Full Monty* may seem like a strange show to try to build a worship service around. The premise of the show, after all, is a group of guys who decide to put on a strip-tease performance, where they will go completely nude. The show can be bawdy, objectifying, a little racist, and for most would be considered a totally inappropriate topic for church.

It is also, however, a story of friendship. It takes a critical view of gender double standards. It examines body shaming that is rampant in our culture and takes on understanding of toxic masculinity.

*The Full Monty* is about a lot more than taking off one's clothes.

Strip away all of the crude humor (pardon the pun), and what is left is a story about a man going through an existential crisis, and finding purpose in bringing joy to the world with his friends. At the heart of the main character's crisis is his own identity and self-worth.

He is a divorced Dad with no job in an old steel town facing economic turmoil. He has lost his wife. He has lost his job. He is about to lose his child, and in the midst of this depression he gets a crazy idea.

It doesn't feel like the kind of story that can easily translate to the Biblical story. Elijah is one of the great prophets of the Hebrew Bible. He achieves amazing feats in the book of 1 Kings. Beyond the Scriptures, there is widespread midrash about Elijah. For many Jewish people, even to this day, Elijah is the emblem of a messianic

In the Biblical story today however, he is facing an existential crisis. Coming off his great victory that proved Yahweh's power as the one true God, the response of his adversaries is not one of awe, reverence, and repentance. Instead, his enemies decide they want revenge. Fleeing for his life, Elijah prays for death.

After withdrawing to a cave, Elijah wishes it could all be over when God tells him to go to the mouth of his cave. There, he sees an incredible force of wind (so strong it destroys rock).

Then, he sees an earthquake. Finally, an earthquake. And God is in none of them. Finally, there is a sound of silence, and God is present.

Elijah's bout with depression is met by God with a simple question: "Why are you here?" Elijah explains that he is all alone. Everyone has abandoned him, and he is better off dead. What Elijah forgot is that an angel had been providing for him for weeks. He left behind an assistant. Then God tells him, "Go find your people."

And Elijah, who for ages insisted that he was alone and no one cared, is sent to find his people, including Elisha (the one who would take up his mantle as the Prophet).

In the midst of this crisis of faith, identity, and mental health, God tells Elijah (and us in the midst of our own crisis):

1. Notice the angels who have been providing for you.
2. Don't do it all. Just do the next thing.
3. Find your people.

For many of us in the midst of such a crisis, these are the steps we should take, too. I don't think God is calling anyone of us to go the full monty. God is however, reminding us that our purpose is to make beauty, love, and joy; and that doing these things is always more fun—and easier—to do when we notice the angels around us, take things one step at a time, and find our people, allies, and fellow advocates.



The 1997 film was nominated for Best Picture and won a Best Music Oscar. David Yazbek wrote the music and lyrics and Terrence McNally wrote the book for *The Full Monty* musical, which made it to Broadway in 2000. It was nominated for 9 Tony Awards, but didn't win any.

**Next Week: The Gospel According to Broadway:  
*Children of Eden; Genesis 3***