

PART 38 – DEFEATING DISCOURAGEMENT

❖ DISCOURAGEMENT

Normally, many times people become angry or discouraged when something in their life does not go the way they wanted or expected it to go. Maybe they wanted a bigger raise at the end of the year and did not get it, or maybe they wanted their football team to win the big game, but they lost. Maybe they wanted to go on a vacation, but something happened and it was cancelled. Maybe they failed at something and it really discouraged them. It is amazing at how easy it is for discouragement to creep into our lives. The issue is still a simple one, however, because what you allow to discourage you is simply a matter of what and how you think.

Now, the unfortunate problem with discouragement is that it drains you and depletes you of so many things in your life. Let us see if we can name a few for beginners. This is a pretty “discouraging” list.

1. It drains you of your physical energy and makes you tired and lethargic.
2. It drains you of your spiritual energy, and leads to doubt and unbelief and blinds you to many of the truths of God’s Word that you desperately need for your life.
3. It can cause you to fear and become anxious in your heart and mind.
4. It leads you to sadness and eventually to depression, both of which can be terribly debilitating.
5. It causes you to doubt God’s goodness, kindness, generosity, sovereignty and love. When you are discouraged, it is difficult to see God’s hand and God’s outworkings in your life.
6. It causes you to give up, when in reality what is discouraging you may be God sent to actually build you up in your faith. Trials and struggles are a very normal part of life, and if you never accept that, you will always be easily discouraged. James said to “**count it all joy when you fall into various trials**”. The word “**various**” means variegated, multi-faceted, many types – big, small, difficult, easy, simple, complicated, unexpected, expected. Trials have no boundaries.
7. It can lead to being careless with your tongue. You are physically tired, emotionally drained, and frustrated, and under those circumstances, you begin to say things that you later regret.
8. It can lead you to anger. This happens when you have been trying to get something in your life under control, but it simply is not working out as you wanted, so you become discouraged, frustrated, and eventually angry.
9. It causes you to become pessimistic and to always be making negative remarks.
10. Worst of all, it makes you become a discourager rather than an encourager. You tear down rather than build up. Rather than bringing hope and encouragement into people’s lives, they become disheartened when they are around you.¹ In reality, they may not even want to be with you.

In some sense, this is probably just a short list of how discouragement hurts your life. Then, on top of these, the more often that you allow certain people or circumstances to make you discouraged, the greater will be your neural pathways towards becoming even more discouraged in the future.

Now, I know this may seem very arrogant on my part, but just bear with me for a moment. As best as I know how, I refuse to become discouraged. I deeply believe that I have to resist discouragement as much as I have to resist anything else in my life. I have to resist being an angry person, or developing

¹ Jenthorn, ep.

bad habits in my life, or cursing, or being a gossip, or becoming spiritually indifferent. I have to resist being proud, or being selfish, or just speaking my mind whenever I please. No Christian is exempt from fighting these battles. For me, however, my mindset and neural pathway is that God is much greater than my disappointments and whatever may try to despair me. He is greater than any difficult person, any difficult circumstance, and any difficult moment. That is a neural pathway you must build into your life over a period of time. Am I some kind of spiritual giant that never has to deal with discouraging moments? Not at all. We all have to fight against some form of discouragement every day of our lives. Why do we have to do that? It is because we have an invisible spiritual enemy who is constantly trying to discourage us in our spiritual life, and one of his main tools is other people and trying circumstances.

Ultimately, you have to accept that discouragement is always a choice. It can easily be brought on by things like becoming very tired, or becoming extremely frustrated with someone or some very difficult circumstance. It can easily be brought on when you fail at something where success meant everything to you. I remember one quote that I read relative to discouragement and it said "*Just when I think I can make ends meet, someone moves the ends.*" We have all experienced that at different times in our lives, so I am not minimizing the reality that discouraging moments and events happen to all of us. Your marriage partner can discourage you, your children can discourage you, your friends can discourage you, your job can discourage you, your church can discourage you, the government can discourage you, and other Christians can discourage you. Once again, the list is endless.

So, I am sure that there are circumstances that anyone can face that can discourage them at times. The Scriptures are replete with many of God servants who became very discouraged. I often struggle sometimes just reading through Jeremiah. That poor prophet endured as much as a prophet could endure, and everytime that I read it, I ask myself "*I wonder how I would have endured the insults, the hatred, and the trials that Jeremiah endured?*" No wonder he was depressed. With all that is going on with my cancer, it would be easy to be discouraged, but I am not discouraged or depressed. To the contrary, I have great joy, great peace, and great hope, but it is not because of just sheer determination on my part. It does not come from gritting my teeth and saying "*I will not be discouraged.*" Nope, that is not it. It comes from having a strong neural pathway of trusting God that I have built into my heart and my mind from years of knowing Him and trusting Him. I believe that many of you have the same mindset. Why? It is because you know that God is the One who never disappoints, who never leaves you, who is completely sovereign over all things, and who knows what is best for your life. I love [Joshua 1:9](#),

Jos 1:9 (NKJV) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'

[Isaiah 41:10](#) says,

Isa 41:10 (NKJV) 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.'

[2 Corinthians 4:16-18](#) says,

2Co 4:16 (NKJV) Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at

the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

This is how God thinks and this is how God wants you to think when something in your life sneaks in to discourage you. This is going through whatever difficulty you are facing **by faith**. The Christian life is always about trusting God with everything that is happening in your life. [Romans 8:28](#) says,

Ro 8:28 (NKJV) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

“**Knowing**” something happens in your mind, in your heart. I doubt that many Christians are very satisfied with this verse when things are not going as they may have wanted them to go, but this is how God wants you to think because this is how He thinks. [Psalm 27:1](#) says the following,

Ps 27:1 (NKJV) A Psalm of David. 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?

I think that you could just as easily say “**What shall I fear?**” or “**Of what shall I be afraid?**” or even “**Of what shall I be discouraged?**” This is how God wants you to think. These are the kind of verses that He wants you to place into your mind so that you will have a strong neural pathway when discouragement tries to overcome you. [John 16:33](#) says,

Jn 16:33 (NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

KEY PRINCIPLE 133: YOU MUST DISCIPLINE AND TRAIN YOUR MIND TO SEE GOD’S HAND IN EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE.

This may seem like an overstatement, but I believe that it is very accurate.

The source of every discouragement is a lie from Satan.

If you get into the habit of letting the enemy lie to you and deceive you with his lies, you will become discouraged. **He knows that if he can get you to become discouraged that he can then much more easily get you to think negatively.** Here is what he knows about being negative about everything.

Brain Facts:

1. He knows that when you become a negative thinking person, that he can destroy the relationships that you have with everyone else in your life. No one enjoys being around negative people.
2. He knows that negative thinking deeply impacts your body’s health. Why? It is because every negative thought that you have effects every cell in your body in a negative way. You literally and physiologically become a negative person.
3. He knows that negative thinking hinders you from getting good sleep and rest, and sleep deprivation eventually leads to depression.
4. He knows that negative thinking makes you moody and difficult to be around.
5. He knows that negative thinking actually causes you to want to binge on eating the wrong kinds of foods to help cope with your negativity. No wonder people feel so bad and are so unhealthy.

So, you must understand that both the enemy and your flesh want you to become discouraged, to be disappointed, disheartened, and dejected. They tell you that you have a right to be discouraged and dismayed by something someone else may have done or said or something that is not working out like you wanted it to work out. One of the worst side effects of discouragement is that it is one of the enemy's doorways directly into depression. If you stay discouraged long enough, you will eventually become depressed, and depression is a much stronger neural pathway in your brain than discouragement. So, having a strong faith in God and in the Word of God is essential not just for your spiritual health, but for your mental, emotional, and physical health as well.

Let me ask two obvious questions at this point. Let us assume that you had a really difficult day and you became really discouraged about something. You wanted something to work out a certain way and that simply did not happen. At that point, you have to ask yourself a very simple question, so listen carefully – “*What am I thinking that brought me to a place of discouragement?*” I am not saying that there are not things in your life that can discourage you. They are certainly there and they are very real. However, the issue is not that you will not be exposed to discouraging people and circumstances, but how are you going to let those discouraging moments impact your life. If you are not careful, they will quickly defeat you, so you have to change your thinking to think like God thinks. The Old Testament talks about those who “**strengthened themselves in the Lord**”. For instance, [1 Samuel 30:6](#) says,

1Sa 30:6 (NKJV) **Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.**

Paul's prayer in [Ephesians 3:16](#) is,

Eph 3:16 (NKJV) **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**

Paul prays again in [Colossians 1:11](#) that you would be,

Col 1:11 (NKJV) **strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

He says in [2 Timothy 4:17](#),

2Ti 4:17 (NKJV) **But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.**

You can choose to go it alone and see how that works out, or you can choose to let God strengthen you when you sense that you are becoming discouraged and see how that works out. The second question is simple – “*Do I believe that God wants me to be discouraged?*” I would say “*No, not at all*”. [Deuteronomy 31:8](#) says,

Dt 31:8 (NKJV) **And the LORD, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.**"

This is how God wants you to think. This is the mindset that He wants you to constantly be building into your life. The problem that the average Christian has who is always struggling in this area of their

thought life is that they very often lack endurance and perseverance. They make some personal resolution to change a needed area of their life and that lasts about a week, but they have nothing in their life that provides the **sustainability** they need. Something negative happens again or something inappropriate is said again and they immediately revert back to where they were before their resolution to change was made. They just have no endurance. Nothing in their spiritual life is sustainable.

Biblical sustainability is when you develop a spiritual mindset that helps you and strengthens you to withstand difficult moments, that helps you to tolerate and endure moments that are uncomfortable. Sustainability is being able to weather the storm. I think of when Peter and John were arrested and thrown in jail, and at midnight they were singing and offering praise to God. Do you think that they were discouraged because they were in jail. I do not think so. To the contrary, they knew how to strengthen themselves in the Lord when difficult moments confronted their life.

Stated in a different way, someone who does not have a “**sustainable faith**” simply is not able to trust God and what He asks them to do in difficult situations. I am not asking you to be superman or superwoman – not at all, but I am saying that **learning to endure and persevere through difficult moments is a normal part of the Christian life**. You have to learn to let God take some time and work “on” someone else while He is working on you at the same time. Most of the time, Christians who do not have a “**sustainable faith**” become impatient, and what impatience does is create very unreasonable expectations as to when and how fast God should be working. Their default position is always what they want to do, how they want to think, when they want results to happen, and persevering through something difficult is just not on their agenda. That is a recipe for becoming spiritually bankrupt in your life.

What and how you think always governs your life in every situation that you face, in every trial that God allows in your life, and in every unpleasant moment that irritates and frustrates you.

You must come to a place where you actually believe what God says in [James 1:2-4](#),

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance, perseverance). ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

Most trials that you experience are generally sent to you by God to see how much you will actually trust Him, and whether or not you will allow the testing to produce in you what He wants it to produce in you. I know that is not what you may want to hear, but it is simply how God works in every believer’s life.

KEY PRINCIPLE 134: IF YOU DESIRE GOD’S BLESSINGS ON YOUR LIFE, THEN YOU MUST YIELD TO HIS TESTING OF YOUR FAITH.

There will ALWAYS be very difficult days, difficult people, and difficult moments that God wants you to learn how to endure and persevere through in a way that honors Him. Tattoo that in your mind. Make it a strong neural pathway so that you are not surprised when those times afflict you. The word of God is explicitly clear that you WILL have “**various trials**”, that they are a test from God, and that you must be patient and persevering in their work of God in your life. The quicker that you come to grips with that reality, the more freedom that God has to change your life, and the more that God is able to change your life, then the more He will change your difficult circumstances.

The problem that most people have is that they are always trying to change someone else rather than letting God change them.

You can be assured that you have no power to change anyone – not one single person, so why keep trying? If you do not believe me, then just pick someone out that you struggle with and go try and change them with your methodology, your words, and your decisions, and then let me know how all of that works out for you. I can assure you that it will not be good.

As a believer, you must develop the discipline of refusing those thoughts and ideas that the enemy places into your mind every day that simply are not from God. You have to understand that your trials are very often divinely ordained, so you have to **LEARN** how to refuse to listen to and then accept the lies of the devil in blaming someone else. You have to **LEARN** how to implement [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](#) which says,

2Co 10:4 (NKJV) For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

This idea of “**bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**” is not an easy task. It is something that you will have to learn to do every day – to evaluate if what you are actually thinking is what and how God wants you to think. If something difficult or discouraging happens in your life, you have to immediately examine what and how you are going to think about it, or what is discouraging you will begin to overwhelm you. When that happens, you lose your spiritual perspective, your peace is disturbed, your faith is weakened, your spiritual strength is compromised, and you lose hope. None of that is what God wants to happen.

Please appreciate that I am not saying all of this is easy. You have very real enemies - the world, the flesh, and the devil. However, no matter who the enemy is, this is a discipline that has to be learned and applied when you are going through something difficult, and it cannot be accomplished if you do not know the Word of God. Why? It is because what you are doing is thinking without the Word of God to stabilize your thought life.

Think of the word of God as that which counterbalances and strengthens you in your struggles.

It is what gives you hope and strength in the midst of your trial, your conflict, and your struggle, so you must discipline and train your mind to always go back to the Word of God for the wisdom and strength that you need for your life.

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