



How To Fight Discouragement

Recently, I have received several questions from our web site on the subject of discouragement. One person writes, "I am an evangelist but I feel let down, not wanted?" Another writes, "I am really confused right now. Everybody I ask is going to give me a different answer and I don't know which one is the right one." One person asked multiple questions specifically on this subject: "What does the Bible say about discouragement? Is failure and discouragement the work of Satan or due to our disobedient and foolishness? How about those who strive to be good people yet fail in their life? Why do good Christians get discourage? What can we do to get rid of discouragement?" Having these statements and questions in mind, let's spend a few minutes thinking about this subject.

Let's note what discouragement is. Webster's dictionary defines the word discouragement as the deprivation of confidence, hope, or spirit. The obvious antonyms to discouragement are encouragement, edification, and exhortation. How can one be deprived of confidence, hope, or spirit? The answer to that question will help us understand how to battle discouragement itself.

One may be discouraged due to the influence of sin and Satan in one's life (Matthew 13:39; Acts 10:38). When a person commits sin, he/she ought to feel guilty (because one is truly guilty) and be discouraged for doing such (Romans 3:19). Such discouragement is designed by God to aid one in coming to the conclusion that a sinful lifestyle is not the appropriate course of action to pursue. There are many today, however, who are discouraged in such a fashion, but fail to come to the appropriate conclusions regarding what to do. Instead of rejecting their sin and changing their lives, they choose to ease their consciences through "counselors" that persuade them to accept that their life choices are not truly evil. These seek to rationalize sinful behavior instead of confront and eliminate that behavior. Redefining good and evil

may temporarily deal with discouragement, but ultimately this cannot provide the right solution (Isaiah 5:20). Those who do such end up continuing to be discouraged and wondering why they are in such a depressing situation. The sad answer is that it all began with their own sinful choices. The good news for this person is that one may repent, accept God's standards for behavior, and have a happy life (Acts 26:18-20; Hebrews 10:22), however, such discouragement is not going to go away until one does so.

One may be discouraged due to a concerted effort on the part of another. Sometimes this effort is intentional and sometimes it is not. For example, a man may suggest an idea and another may intentionally discourage the idea because he doesn't like it. On the other hand, someone may unintentionally discourage an idea by bringing up obstacles to the idea. It may not be the intention of this individual to squash the idea, but nonetheless, he can discourage the one who suggested it by so behaving. In such situations, the discouragement is not necessarily the fault of the individual who is discouraged (as it would be if sin were involved), but rather, it is due to the circumstances surrounding his personal confidence, hope, and spirit.

In the case of one who has been intentionally discouraged, one may fight such discouragement by prayer, pleading one's case, trying again, or going at it in a different way. Just because we have been discouraged, doesn't mean we have to quit in our efforts. Recall Jesus parable of the unjust judge who daily refused to hear a woman's pleas, but because of her much pleading he eventually ruled on her behalf (Luke 18:2-5). Jesus said this parable was to teach us always to pray and never to faint.

In situations where the discouragement is not intentional, one should look for other explanations as opposed to assuming that the discourager merely does not want to help. Are we all working toward the same goal? If so, then we should view words that discourage in a positive light, not as destructive criti-

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cism, but constructive. Knowing that another's intentions are not to discourage goes a long way toward battling personal discouragement. When we love our brethren, we "bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Sometimes, however, there seems to be no one individual "cause" to discouragement. One simply gets discouraged due to the many pressures, stresses, and unfortunate downturns of unpredictable life. Sickness, layoffs, accidents, and even death, whether of near relatives or distance friends, can all take their toll on our personal optimism. Many times discouragement is not the result of one thing, but the combination of many things. What can the Christian do to fight this type of discouragement?

First, we should recognize that we always have reason to rejoice. Paul wrote from a prison cell "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). When we are suffering trials and temptations, the Christian is to rejoice (James 1:2, 3). Even in times of persecution, the attitude of the Christian is to be to rejoice (Matthew 5:10-12). It is encouraging to note that there is nothing that the Christian can do (as long as he is following Christ) that God cannot use for good (Romans 8:28). And as long as we are serving the Lord, then we can KNOW that our actions are profitable (1 Corinthians 15:58). With such things in mind, we can proclaim along

with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Second, there is no such thing as failure with the faithful Christian. What we perceive as failure should be viewed with optimism, not pessimism. The old sayings are true: All sunshine makes a desert, and you've got to have a little rain to make the flowers grow! When we fail (and that failure is not associated with sin) we should look at that as an opportunity to grow and learn. Even failures that are associated with sin can be turned into something positive if we learn from those failures and cease to be-

All sunshine makes a desert.

have in the ways which lead us to those failures, i.e. we repent. Tom Landry was once overheard saying, "We don't learn very much from the games that we win." There is truth in that. Failure has many lessons to teach us, and we can grow stronger from it if we are open to allowing God's truth to work in our lives. Don't look at failures as "setbacks" look at failure as "opportunities!" Paul the apostle wrote, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Third, the best solution to discouragement is to get to work. I heard

someone say a long time ago that dreading is worse than doing. If we allow our discouragement to stop us from doing the work that God has set before us to do, then we have allowed dread and discouragement to overcome our actions. However, if we say to ourselves, "Yes, I feel miserable right now, but I am going to do God's work anyway," then we will be able to overcome. We must not allow dreading to prevent us from doing. Hebrews 6:9-20 is a great passage to encourage us to continue faithfully in God's work as we press toward the goal of heaven. If you want to get rid of discouragement, then get busy doing something productive in the kingdom of God! Visit the sick; go to a nursing home; volunteer at school; help some orphans; go on a mission campaign; sweep out the church building; anything that you can do for the Lord, do it!

Discouragement is a reality with which every Christian must deal, however, let us remember that we are not mere animals, that simply react to every stimulus with which we are presented; we are made in the image of God, and that means when confronted with discouragement, we have a choice. We can choose to mope, groan, and laze about, or we can choose to act positively toward such situations and resolve to be invigorated and seek to overcome the causes of our present distress. As Christians, let's choose the later and not succumb to the former.

Kevin Cauley

Sermons and Study Topics

Week of 7/04/04

Morning	Freedom
Scripture	Galatians 5:1, 13
Evening	The church's work of Benevolence
Scripture	Galatians 6:10
Sunday Morning Bible Study	The Book of Hebrews
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	The Book of Micah

Weekly Record

Week of 6/27/04

Sunday Class	51
Sunday A.M.	67
Sunday P.M.	44
Wednesday	50
Contribution	\$1839.25
Budget	\$1778.13

Today I Resolve . . .

- ◆ Like PAUL, to forget those things which are behind and press forward (Philippians 3:13).
- ◆ Like DAVID, to lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help (Psalm 121:1).
- ◆ Like ABRAHAM, to trust implicitly in my God (Romans 4:20, 21).
- ◆ Like ENOCH, to walk in daily fellowship with God (Genesis 5:24).
- ◆ Like JEHOSAPHAT, to prepare my heart to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 19:3).
- ◆ Like MOSES, to choose to suffer rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25).
- ◆ Like DANIEL, to commune with God at all times and in all places (Daniel 6:10).
- ◆ Like JOB, to be patient under all circumstances (Job 1:21; James 5:11).
- ◆ Like CALEB & JOSHUA, to refuse to be discouraged because of superior numbers (Numbers 14:5-10).
- ◆ Like JOSEPH, to turn my back on all seductive advances (Genesis 39:9).
- ◆ Like GIDEON, to advance, even though my friends are few (Judges 7:16-22).
- ◆ Like AARON & HUR, to uphold the hands of my ministers and leaders of the church with my prayers and support (Exodus 17:12).
- ◆ Like ANDREW, to strive to lead my brother to Christ (John 1:40, 41).
- ◆ Like STEPHEN, to manifest a forgiving spirit toward all who seek my hurt (Acts 7:60).
- ◆ Like JESUS, to go about doing good (Acts 10:38).

Kevin's Korner

Today is the 4th of July. The next time that the 4th of July will be on a Sunday will be July 4th, 2010. It is only about every six years that this occurs and sometimes, due to the leap year it happens less frequently. So it is an interesting combination to have July 4th fall on a Sunday. Several thoughts come to mind in this regard.

First, just because July 4th is on a Sunday doesn't mean that we take anything away from what is always our number one priority, God. Sunday is still the Lord's day; Sunday is still the day that we worship God; Sunday is still the day in which we honor God first.

Second, while we celebrate our nation's independence on July 4th of each year, we celebrate our inde-

pendence from sin and Satan each Sunday through remembering the death of Jesus in the Lord's supper. True freedom comes through Jesus (John 8:32)!

Third, while we celebrate the birth of our nation, we also remember the birth of our spiritual nation as well. On the day of Pentecost about A.D. 30, the church was born. We are privileged to be members of Christ's church today.

Finally, while these spiritual matters do come first, it is with complete and utter thankfulness that God has blessed us to be part of a nation in which we have the freedom to worship Him. We have a pretty good situation in our nation, and we ought to work to keep it that way. Let us remember on our nation's independence day that Christians are to be law abiding citizens, that Christians are the best citizens that a nation can

have, and that we as Christians must stand up for what is right in our nation lest God take away his blessings from us. Political freedom may be a right in our country, but it is a God given privilege. Let us act accordingly so that that privilege is not revoked.

Elders:

Clay Bozarth, Leon Duncan,
Bruce Foster, Bill Fort, Glenn
Quigley

Deacons:

Ken Smith, Brent Stevens,
Rusty Windle.

Preacher:

Kevin Cauley... 870-423-6707

Prayers and Proclamations

- We are truly thankful to God for the wonderful new Lord's day that he has given us today to worship him in Spirit and in Truth!
- Please remember the following in your prayers: Lois Bales, Gary Bragg, Travis Jackson.
- Don't forget our shut-ins: Curtis Hull, Edith Mischler, Art Roberts.
- The family of Art Roberts has requested prayers as they have some decisions to make regarding Art's care in the near future.
- If you would like to sign up to bring lunch to Art Roberts on Sunday, there are some times available.
- Tonight will be our annual fireworks get together at the Williams' house. Please bring food! Especially ice cream! The monthly youth devotional will be held in conjunction with this event.
- The monthly elders and deacons meeting will be held next Sunday evening, July 11th.
- Kevin will be out of town July 18th through 22nd to conduct a gospel meeting in Heber Springs.
- For the month the following duties are assigned: Announcements, Kevin Cauley; Worship Coordinator, Leon Duncan; Prepare Communion, Donna Henderson and Wilma Morris; Carry Communion, John Gass, Brent Stevens.
- The pantry item for this week is Fabric Softener.



Welcome!

To the Berryville church of Christ.

Family Times for Worship and Study

Sunday Morning Bible Class:..... 9:30 AM
 Sunday Morning Worship: 10:30 AM
 Sunday Evening Worship: 6:00 PM
 Ladies Bible Class: 10:30 AM
 Wed. Evening Bible Class: 7:00 PM

Serving Each Other

	July 4th, 2004	July 11th, 2004
Sunday Morning		
Songs:	Larry Elliott	Ken Smith
Preaching:	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
Opening Prayer:	Dan Hand	Bob Moore
Scripture Reading:	Brandon Foster	Leon Duncan
Lord's Table	Matt Bassing	Bruce Foster
	Jerry Roller	Dan Hand
(assist)	Jack Gentry	Perry Foster
	Brent Moore	Ray Duncan
Closing Prayer	Leon Duncan	George Eddings
Sunday Evening		
Songs:	Clay Bozarth	Larry Elliott
Preaching:	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
Opening Prayer:	Ken Smith	Dale Pinkley
Scripture Reading:	John Gass	Dan Hand
Lord's Table	Glenn Williams	John Gass
	Ray Duncan	Brandon Foster
Closing Prayer	Dale Pinkley	Bob Moore
Wednesday		
Songs:	Kevin Cauley	Clay Bozarth
Opening Prayer:	Dale Pinkley	Brent Stevens
Invitation:	Dan Hand	Rusty Windle
Closing Prayer:	George Eddings	Leon Duncan

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