

Hearts Fit for the Journey

Learning to Live an Abundant Life

Defeating Discouragement – Jn.10:10

I. Introduction

A. Have you ever been discouraged?

- a. Have you ever faced times in your life when you just did not feel like you could go any further, spiritually speaking?**
- b. Have you ever felt like no matter how hard you tried to do what was right, you just kept messing up?**
- c. Have you ever felt like the world was out to get you and that you were the only one who had to deal with real difficulties in life?**
- d. Have you ever gotten to the point where you just felt like you were the only one left trying to do God's will?**
- e. If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you have had experience with the problem known as discouragement**

B. What is discouragement?

- a. "One who is made less hopeful or enthusiastic, 2. One who is made to be unwilling or unlikely to do something they need to be doing."**
- b. In the Bible the word means to become disheartened, and our enemy will use discouragement to keep us from becoming what God wants us to become, or to keep us from focusing on what God would have us to be doing (remember Job)**
- c. Numerous congregations have lost their focus because of the discouragement that comes from internal disunity**
- d. Countless individual Christians have left the Lord because they had become discouraged about their inability to do what**

they knew to be right or because of the hypocrisy of their fellow Christians—New Christians are especially susceptible to this kind of discouragement

C. Discouragement is a fact of life!!!

1. “The most essential factor in persistence is the determination to never allow your energy or enthusiasm to be dampened by the discouragement that must inevitably come” James Riley
2. Discouragement is caused by a number of different factors, and if we allow it to, it will render us virtually incapable of living the Christian life to the fullest
3. However, what we all need to keep in mind is the fact that being discouraged is not necessarily a sign of spiritual weakness—even the strongest of God’s people face discouragement
4. The Bible is full of examples of this very thing, one of the best known examples being found in the story of Elijah

D. *1 Kings 19:1-18*

1. 1 Kings chapter 18 records the victory of God, through His servant Elijah, over the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (450 in all)
2. This should have been a moment of great strength and joy for Elijah, however, the evil queen Jezebel threatened to take his life and thus he became discouraged
3. It is as though he says to himself—what is the purpose of speaking to these people? It does not accomplish anything
4. Instead of rejoicing in the victory of the Lord:
 - a. Elijah is praying that he might die
 - b. He convinces himself that he is all alone and that no one else seeks to know or do the Lord’s will
 - c. He had become so discouraged that he had forgotten what great things God had just accomplished in his life
 - d. That is what discouragement will do in our lives as well

E. In the remainder of our lesson we shall discuss the subject of discouragement, paying particular attention to the following 3 questions

1. Who faces it?
2. What causes it?
3. How do we defeat or overcome it?

II. Discouragement: Who Faces It?

A. As I said, discouragement is a fact of life

- a. If we don't face it today, it won't be long before we do face discouragement of one kind or another
- b. But I have a feeling that some of you are struggling with discouragement as we sit here today
 - a. Maybe you have put out 20 or 30 resumes and still have no job
 - c. Perhaps you are struggling with some secret sin that just won't go away and are discouraged because you feel like you will never be good enough
 - d. Perhaps you have been hurt by the words and actions of another
 - e. Maybe you are struggling with the limitations of becoming less than young—it can be extremely difficult to come to the realization that we can't do what we did in the past and never will be able to do again
 - f. Maybe there are even some here today who are struggling with the discouragement of knowing you are not doing all you could in the service of the Lord
 - g. Whatever it may be caused by, discouragement is a fact of life

B. The problem with discouragement is this:

1. The more we experience discouragement, the more of a problem it becomes

2. Discouragement is a sickness of the heart
3. Despondency, hopelessness, and depression are all symptoms of the same sickness, that being discouragement
4. Discouragement thus must be understood and overcome because it robs us of the good life and keeps us from enjoying the journey

III. Discouragement: What Causes It?

A. In a word—Disappointment

1. And when we line up disappointment after disappointment the end result is discouragement
2. When it comes to discouragement what we are dealing with is a gradual progression
 - a. It starts with disappointment
 - b. Then turns to discouragement
 - c. Which if not dealt with leads to hopelessness and depression
4. How can we reduce our disappointments in life so that we are not discouraged as often and thus don't become depressed?

B. Am I doing something that contributes to my disappointment?

1. Now I am not naïve enough to believe that we are going to eliminate all disappointment from our lives because we are not
2. However, a lot of disappointment, which leads to discouragement, comes as a direct result of my own actions and thinking
3. Consider this:
 - a. Because of our belief system, because of the attitudes we hold on to, because of the way we approach problems

- b. We frequently set ourselves up for failure and often prolong our disappointments in those failures**
- c. How do we do this you ask?**
- d. It is through unrealistic expectations**

4. Thus, while we can't eliminate disappointment we can certainly make sure that we are not doing anything to contribute to it

C. What are some of our unrealistic expectations that lead to disappointment and thus discouragement?

1. Unrealistic expectations of self—especially in regard to our inability to live as we know we should—Jm.4:17

a. How many of us have said, “I would never do that”

b. Let me tell you something, Satan loves that kind of talk

c. If he get you to believe that you are above a temptation, then he knows exactly what to do to tempt you and thus cause discouragement because you said you would never do exactly what he got you to do

d. Peter is a great example of this kind of pride in self and the effects it can have on us

e. As I said earlier, new Christians are especially susceptible to this kind of discouragement

i. When one obeys the gospel, they are usually so full of excitement and energy

ii. They tell themselves that they are going to do so many things for the Lord, and yet many times they fail to keep those promises that they made to God—Why?

iii. I am convinced that one of the main reasons new converts fail to live as they know that should, is the discouragement that often comes when they realize that not only is it difficult to live as God wants us to live, it is often more difficult than it was before they became Christians

f. Why would it be more difficult at times to live right after becoming a Christian than it was before we became a Christian?

i. 1 Pet.5:8

ii. It is more difficult because our adversary works harder to make it more difficult

iii. After you become a Christian the devil will work harder than he ever has before to cause you to stumble

iv. Especially right after you have become a child of God, because this is when he knows you are most vulnerable to the discouragement that comes from not being able to do what you know you need to and want to do

g. Some things to remember!!!

i. All sin and fall short of the glory of God—Rom.3:23

ii. What we need to do is learn from our mistakes, so that we will be less likely to make those same mistakes in the future

iii. That is what growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is about—2 Pet.3:18

*iv. “Defeat should never be a source of discouragement but rather a fresh stimulus.”
Robert South*

h. 2 Reasons why discouragement sets in when we fail to live up to our unrealistic expectations

i. Because we dwell on our mistakes rather than asking for and accepting God’s forgiveness

ii. Because we continue to focus on our failures rather than our potential

iii. I am not trying to justify a low expectation of self, I am trying to get us all to understand that we are not perfect and will fail ourselves at times

iv. The key is to face our failures, learn from them and then forget them

2. Unrealistic expectations of God and others

a. Many times we set ourselves up for discouragement by saying things like “This is not what I expected from God”

b. Too many times we are guilty of thinking that God ought to act or

react according to our own expectations of Him

- c. Thus, when God does not do what we expected Him to do, we become disappointed and discouraged
- d. Do we have the right to expect God to do what we expect God to do or say what we expect Him to say?
- e. Example—Mt.19:16-22—Rich Young Ruler

- i. *The rich young ruler came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life*
- ii. *Jesus told him to keep the commandments and he said he had*
- iii. *Jesus then tells him to sell all he had and give it to the poor*
- iv. *Thus, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions*
- v. *In other words he was discouraged because Jesus did not say and do what he expected him to say and do*
- vi. *This young man went away thinking Jesus was asking too much when in reality He was asking no more than He asks of everyone else*

- f. Far too often we are guilty of going to God looking for a certain answer when we should have just looked for God's answer
- g. When we do this we are in effect setting up both God and ourselves because, as I said, when God does not act the way we think he should we get disappointed and the more times this happens the more discouraged we get
- h. This goes for our interactions with other people as well
- i. Here is often our thought pattern
- i. *We think if we are spiritual enough:*

- a. We will never get cancer or suffer from health problems
- b. We will never lose our job
- c. That all of our children will turn out the way we wanted them to
- d. We will never deal with want
- e. That everything will be perfect and it just isn't so and we have no biblical basis for believing it would be in the first place

ii. *Don't set God up to disappoint you*

iii. *If you have expectations of God make sure that are based upon His revealed will and even then keep in mind that God does not always do what He says He will in the way we though He would do it*

3. Unrealistic expectations in regard to results

- a. How many of us would like:

i. *To have the results without doing any work?*

ii. *To have perfect health without eating right and exercising?*

iii. *Financial security without working for it—why do you think the lottery is so popular*

iv. *A great marriage without the time and sacrifice required to build it up?*

v. *To know the Bible better without having to read and study it?*

vi. *The fact is that we will not have any of those things unless we work for them and*

*when we expect that we will
without it we are setting
ourselves up for a lot of
disappointment and
discouragement*

- b. Regardless of what our society says or tries to get you to believe, results without effort is an unrealistic expectation**
- c. Lets apply this principles to our spiritual lives which quite frankly is often one of our greatest sources of discouragement**

- i. The Bible teaches that when we become a part of the church that we become a new creation, that we are born again—2 Cor.5:21, Jn.3:3-5*

- ii. What we often fail to understand is the fact that this new creation is a process*

- ii. Jesus prayed that the Lord would sanctify us in His truth (Jn.17:17), but sanctification is not an event it is a process whereby we continue to grow as we walk in the light as He is in the light*

- iii. God is in the process right now of:*

- a. Molding us**

- b. Shaping us**

- c. Forming us**

- d. Developing us**

- e. And making us into the person He wants us to be and this is not an easy or short process**

- iv. When we think that become God's people is easy we are setting ourselves up for some major discouragement*

- v. How many times do we bring about our own discouragement by our*

*unrealistic expectations of what it
takes to become the person God
wants us to become?*

- d. **Nothing worthwhile in life comes easy and when we think that it will we are often discouraged of our own doing**

IV. Discouragement: How Do We Defeat It?

A. Do something nice for someone else

- a. **Sometimes discouragement comes from the fact that we are too inwardly focused—it's all about me, me, me**
- b. **The more I think about my own problems, the more discouraged I am likely to become—this also leads to selfishness**
- c. **Doing something nice for some one else will help take your attention off your own problems, and in many cases it will help you to see that your troubles were not that great to begin with**

B. Look for bright spots even in the midst of discouragement

- a. **“Develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest stepping stones to success.”
Dale Carnegie**
- b. **Jm.1:2-4**
- c. **When you are discouraged, ask yourself this question;**
- d. **What can I learn from this situation that will help me to be a better Christian, husband, wife, parent, employee**

C. Remember the fact that you are not alone

- a. **God—Heb.13:5**
- b. **Fellow Christians—Heb.10:24-25**

D. Don't forget to pray

- a. *Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane—Mt.26*
- b. *When Peter was thrown into jail the early church prayed—Acts 12:5*
- c. *Paul's “thorn in the flesh”—2 Cor.12:7-9*

d. Prayer is one of our greatest weapons in times of discouragement—Ph.4:6-7

E. Don't ever give up

a. 1 Cor.15:58

b. Gal.6:9

c. Eternal salvation is for the strong, and those who persevere to the end

d. "Permanence, perseverance, and persistence in spite of all obstacles, discouragement, and impossibilities: It is this, that in all things distinguishes the strong soul from the weak." Thomas Carlyle

V. Conclusion

A. Discouragement

a. Is just one of those problems that has plagued man from the beginning of time—"as Solomon said there is nothing new under the sun"

b. Discouragement that goes unchecked can be detrimental to the healthy Christian life

c. Discouragement:

a. Will rob you of your joy

b. Will take your focus away from where it needs to be

c. Will prevent you from living the kind of life God wants you to enjoy

d. This is not to say that the Christian life will always be easy, it won't be, and in fact Jesus never promised that it would be

e. What He did promise is the fact that we can overcome discouragement when it comes

f. Every great work, every great accomplishment, has been brought into manifestation through holding to the vision, and often just before the big achievement, comes apparent failure and discouragement."

B. Invitation