

“DEALING WITH DISCOURAGEMENT”

I Samuel 30:6

“And 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 for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.”

God does not promise His servants immunity from periods of discouragement consequently, the Devil takes advantage of us. It is our arch enemy’s strategy to: rob our souls; rule our spirits and ruin our bodies. And what better weapon can he use for these purposes than discouragement, despondency and depression?

You and I have the high and holy responsibility of ministering to wounded, hurting and despondent people who need encouragement. If we are discouraged, we can be of little help to them. And, lest you think that if you are discouraged you are some kind of misfit, let me remind you that you are not alone! All God’s servants go through bouts of discouragement from time to time – or as John Bunyan stated it, walk through the “Slough Of Despond.”

Can you name the 3 great servants of God who wanted to die and get it over with? There was: Moses - Num 11:15 “If this is how you are going to treat me put me to death right now.” Elijah – I Kings 19:4 “went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die.” Jonah – Jonah 4:3 “Now O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” God’s servants not immune to Discouragement!

In I Samuel 30 we see a discouraged David. Have you ever been discouraged? Are you now discouraged? If not, cheer up! You will be some day! Discouragement is: common to all, it is contagious– it spreads if not checked and leads to defeat if not reversed.

Discouragement affects us: Physiologically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. It:

- divests of spiritual power;
- diverts ones spiritual focus;
- dampens our devotion;
- deadens our sensitivities;
- disrupts our spiritual growth;
- damages our testimony;
- drains our soul of power;
- destroys our ministries – some of the devastating results of perpetual discouragement.

ILLUST: A preacher had a dream that the Devil was auctioning off all his tools that he used to hinder Christian workers: The tools of greed, jealousy, gossip, doubt and strife were sold. But the one tool that the Devil kept was discouragement. **How, then, can I deal with discouragement ?**

1. BE ALERT TO THE CAUSES FOR DISCOURAGEMENT.

What are some situations that cause discouragement? In the I Sam. 30 several causative factors are found:

- A. David Was Physically Tired. I Sam. 30:1-6 - He had just completed a three day march.
- B. He Was Mentally Overwhelmed. v. 1b-3 - Shock and consternation took over his mental faculties.
- C. He Was Emotionally Drained. v. 4 - His loss was devastating, his grief was unbearable and his heart was broken.
- D. His Followers Rebelled. v. 6 – They were bitterly playing the blame game.
- E. His Life Was Threatened. v.6 – The people talked of stoning him to death.
- F. His Leadership Was Challenged. v.6

Any one of the factors that David faced had the potential to plunge him into discouragement if not immediately addressed. We will not find ourselves in the identical situation David was in at Ziklag, However there are parallels in the complexities of modern life and Ministry. Forces and foes and frustrations press upon us daily. We must be alert to the causes for discouragement, know when stress is mounting and deal with them.

2. BE AWARE OF THE CURE FOR DISCOURAGEMENT.

How did David deal with discouragement?

- A. David Helped Himself.
v. 6-b “David encouraged himself in the Lord.”
He took the initiative! – He did not just lie there and wallow in self-pity. In his distressed state of mind he did not abandon reason or faith.

Deliverance from discouragement begins with the one who is discouraged. I have spent many hours counseling discouraged persons, many of whom are expecting someone else to deliver them from discouragement with little or no self effort. Unless the discouraged person becomes pro-active the process of encouragement will seldom get results.
- B. David Turned To The Lord
v.6-b “but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.”
And v. 8 “David inquired of the Lord.” I believe he prayed, I believe he quoted some of the Psalms he had written, I believe he claimed God’s past promises as well. Also,
- C. David Sought Human Help.
v.7 David went to Abiathar, the priest. We need counselors, friends, associates. One of the worst things one who is discouraged can do is to withdraw from human contact.

D. David Resumed Leading.

v.9 "So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him" v.10 "David pursued." He talked with God, v.8 and then talked to his troops. He must have given quite a speech for in v.6 they are bitter and talking about stoning him and in v.9 they are willing to follow him and die. We may get discouraged, but we must get over it and give leadership to God's people!

Some practical lessons I have learned while working through discouragement:

(1) Take care of your body.

Rest, exercise, eat well (high protein, low carb, low sugar diet)

(2) Take care of your spirit.

Humor is good - laugh! Listen to good music; instrumentals especially; read through the hymn book ; socialize - be with family and friends.

(3) Take care of your soul.

Read the Word of God systematically. Pray, listen to sermons on tape, attend worship services, praise – raise your gaze and praise!

(4) Take care of your ministry.

- Recognize your limitations. Don't try to cover all the bases and sell popcorn in the stands at the same time!
- Prioritize your responsibilities: essential then non-essential.
- Compartmentalize your life: Church/home; work/play etc.
- Deputize others by giving away some of your ministry. Develop a philosophy of ministry that adopts the Jethro principle: delegate. Don't be a one man show!
- Organize your work. Refuse to continuously operate in a crisis management mode, instead plan your work and work your plan. Don't be a control freak!
- Visualize the Big Picture, keep it in view. Major on the majors – keeping the main thing the main thing is the main thing!

Being alert to the causes for discouragement and aware of the cure for discouragement is not the complete remedy. There is another step to take for complete deliverance from discouragement. That is:

3. BE ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING OTHERS.

David must have greatly encouraged his men for they rallied around him and rescued their loved ones. As Christian servants we too can rescue people. Many need to be rescued from discouragement.

F.B. Meyer said, "If I had my ministry to live over I would preach more sermons of encouragement to God's people." Phillips Brooks said, "Preach to broken hearts and you will never lack for a congregation." Be an encourager!

ILLUST. Enrico Caruso, was acclaimed as the world's greatest tenor singer. He could

literally shatter glass by his high notes. / AS A BOY he took voice lessons. After a few lessons his teacher said, "You can't sing. Your voice sounds like the wind blowing through the shutters! Give up trying to sing!" He went home terribly discouraged. His mother said, "Son, I am going to make every sacrifice to pay another teacher for voice lessons." Her constant encouragement paid off. Enrico Caruso became the world's greatest tenor singer. A little encouragement can spark a great accomplishment!

Chuck Swindoll writes in "Growing Strong In the Seasons Of Life": "I firmly believe that an individual is never more Christlike than when full of compassion for those who are down ... discouraged. "Oh, the need for this ministry today! Encourage generously!"

CONCLUSION

ILLUST. From early 1985 to 1991, I served as President of Tennessee Temple University and Seminary and Pastor of the Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, TN. These were special people however, at times the ministry was quite demanding. During one period, like Elijah, the Lord sent a raven to us. We would discover early in the morning, gifts at our front door. Baskets of fruit; pastries; bags of coffee beans; a pair of Rebocks for us both; gift certificates for meals at restaurants and bookstores; on one occasion a watermelon and sometimes an unsigned note of encouragement.

This went on once a week for many, many weeks. We tried to discover who our benefactor was. I got up earlier and earlier. The unknown and unseen visitor always came before daylight. One morning I was up about 4:00 a.m. when a car stopped in front of our home and a figure got out dressed in a white dress, came to door and left package and quietly departed.

I watched this unnoticed. It was a member of our church, a nurse who worked the late shift. We were overcome with emotion – she was dying of cancer! We renamed her "Raven." The Lord used her to help us through a rough time.

I was guest speaker in the First Baptist Church, Stayton, Oregon and read the following in the church paper help wanted column: "Wanted, Encouragement Specialist to head up the ministry of encouragement in our church." Let's all be encouragement specialists!

I am trying to be an encourager. Will you obey, with me, the admonition in Hebrews 10:25 "let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching"?

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