

Dealing With Discouragement

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God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

(Psalms 46:1)

Many of us know how it feels to be discouraged. We have experienced that feeling of disappointment, disheartenment, loss of hope, and lack of confidence. At times discouragement is so severe that we feel like we're drowning. Everything feels so hopeless and we see no way to escape.

The danger of discouragement is that if it is not dealt with properly, it leads to depression and despair. If we allow ourselves to continue in a state of despair, we are soon unable to function as healthy, happy individuals. Our thinking becomes irrational; we begin to make life altering, even life-ending choices. Judas is a sad example of one who so immersed himself in his depression that he ended up taking his own life (Matt. 27:5).

Whether it is due to illness, material loss, emotional trials, or guilt over sin, discouraging circumstances are part of life. Job said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). To lose your job and consequently lose everything you have worked for can be disheartening. Having your marriage end in divorce or experiencing the death of a loved one can be incredibly discouraging life changes. Facing the reality of the hurt your sin has caused and the separation it brings between you and God can cause feelings of deep despair (Is. 59:1-2).

Often we try to deal with life's disappointments on our own and become even more discouraged when our efforts fail. The Bible records many examples of real people who experienced the same life struggles we have and it also records how they dealt with discouragement. King David is a prime example of one who faced discouragement from every source imaginable; loss of loved ones, failed relationships, betrayal, his own sin, David faced it all! Naturally, there were times that David was discouraged (Ps. 27:13-14), but the one thing David knew was who to turn to for help; "Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts" (Ps. 119:173). He believed that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

Our feelings of disappointment, disheartenment, depression and despair can only be remedied with God's help. When our heads are hanging low, when things are not going well, and when everything seems to be falling apart the Lord can lift up our head (Ps. 3:3). Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

If we are going to allow the Lord to help us through our hardships, we must be willing to come to Him in humble obedience and learn how "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8), how He, by the grace of God, tasted death for us (Heb. 2:9), and how He suffered for our sins, "the just for the unjust..." (1 Pet. 3:18). Like Jesus humbled Himself to obey the Father, we must be humble enough to hear and believe His gospel (Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:15-16), repent of our sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confess that Jesus Christ is the son of God (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37) and be baptized into Christ (Gal.3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). In Christ we have access to some amazing spiritual blessings like being added to His church (Acts

2:47), having our sins washed away (Acts 22:16), experiencing unity with other Christians (Eph. 4:1-6) and having fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). The truth is, we will experience trouble and face discouragement as long as we live. There is no escape from the difficulties of life, but we can face all that we must face without losing heart or being overwhelmed by discouragement. We can turn to the Lord for help, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). As Christians we face the same problems and challenges as the rest of the world, but we have the comfort of not facing them alone (Heb. 13:5-6). We can do "all things through Christ which strengtheneth" us (Phil.4:13).