

# ENCOURAGING YOURSELF IN GOD WHEN THERE IS NO HUMAN SUPPORT

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There are seasons in human life when every external support system collapses—friends vanish, family misunderstands, community withdraws, and even religious leaders prove absent. In such solitary crises, the soul faces a unique danger: not just the external threat, but the internal spiral of despair, self-pity, and hopelessness. The Bible records that David, after the devastating raid on Ziklag, found himself in exactly such a vacuum.

## **1 SAMUEL 30:6**

**And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.**

This was not a formulaic “positive confession” nor a denial of pain. It was a raw, deliberate act of spiritual and emotional survival. Below, drawing from biblical narrative and informed by psychological insights on self-regulation and meaning-making, are five non-rhetorical ways to encourage oneself in God when utterly alone.

## **1 SAMUEL 30:1–6**

**Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negeb and on Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way. And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. David’s two wives also had been taken captive... And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.**

## **1. TELL GOD EXACTLY HOW YOU FEEL, THEN REMIND YOURSELF WHAT HE HAS DONE**

When alone, resist the urge to skip straight to praise or to suppress grief. Instead, follow the psalmists' pattern: articulate your exact loss, question God without accusation, and then deliberately recall His past faithfulness. This is not "venting"—it is structured emotional honesty that prevents despair from becoming identity.

### **PSALM 13:1–6**

**How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?" transitions to 6. "But I have trusted in your steadfast love."**

### **LAMENTATIONS 3:19–24**

**Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall!" followed by "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.**

### **QUOTE:**

**"Lament is the vehicle by which the community of faith moves from denial to new covenant." - Walter Brueggemann**

Psychologist James Pennebaker's research on expressive writing shows that translating chaotic emotions into structured language reduces intrusive thoughts and improves immune function.

Speak aloud or write a two-part prayer:

Part A. lists every specific loss and feeling of abandonment.

Part B. Lists three concrete past moments when God acted for you, even minimally.

## **2. MAKE A PHYSICAL LIST OF TIMES GOD CAME THROUGH FOR YOU**

In the absence of human witnesses, externalize your spiritual history.

David had no prophet or friend to remind him of Goliath or Samuel's anointing—he had to deliberately recall. Create a mental or physical object (a journal, a pile of stones, a digital note) that holds specific, dated events where God provided, protected, or redirected you. Review it as a ritual, not as mere nostalgia.

### **1 Samuel 17:34–37**

**David recalls killing lion and bear to bolster faith for Goliath.**

### **PSALM 77:11**

**I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.**

### **QUOTE:**

**“Hope has two beautiful daughters: anger at the way things are, and courage to remember that the past does not have to be the future.” - Augustine of Hippo**

Psychologist Martin Seligman's work on “positive reminiscence” shows that deliberately recalling past successes builds learned optimism, which is distinct from naive positivity.

How to apply alone:

On a blank page, draw a timeline. Mark 3–5 crisis points where you saw an unexpected provision or protection. Write one sentence per event. Read them aloud twice a day for a week.

## **3. DO ONE TINY, MEANINGLESS-LOOKING THING RIGHT NOW**

When alone, the temptation is to wait for a dramatic emotional breakthrough. David's “strengthening” was likely not a lightning bolt but a choice to perform small, concrete actions: pursuing the Amalekites, inquiring of the Lord (v. 8), eating, walking. Psychologically, this leverages behavioral activation—motion

precedes emotion. Spiritually, it incarnates faith in micro-decisions.

### **1 Kings 19:5–8**

**Elijah, alone and suicidal, is strengthened by an angel giving him a small cake and water, then another, then he walks 40 days.**

### **NEHEMIAH 4:10**

**Strength of the bearers of burdens is giving way, yet we built the wall**

Persistence in tiny tasks pushes you through to great achievement.

### **LUKE 16:10**

**One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much.**

### **Quote:**

**"The Lord does not usually fill his servants with such fervor at the outset that they do not feel their weakness; but he strengthens them step by step." - John Calvin**

Psychologist B.F. Skinner's principle of shaping: complex behavior is built by reinforcing successive approximations; a single small action (e.g., drinking water, praying one line) changes the behavioral trajectory.

How to apply alone:

Identify three "negligible" actions you can do in the next hour (make bed, wash face, recite one verse).

Do them without waiting for motivation. Then add a spiritual action: ask God, "What is the one thing

You want me to do next?" and do it immediately.

## **4. USE YOUR BODY TO PRAY WHEN YOUR MIND IS A MESS**

In isolation, the mind loops into catastrophic thinking. David had to physically move—chase, fight, carry armor. Without human support, your body can become a sacramental instrument of encouragement.

Deliberate physical postures (kneeling, lifting hands, walking in rhythm) can precede and shape emotional states. This is not works-righteousness; it is embodied prayer.

#### **PSALM 63:1–4**

**My soul thirsts... so I have looked upon you in the sanctuary... I will lift up my hands.**

David wrote this in the wilderness alone.

#### **ROMANS 12:1**

**Present your bodies as a living sacrifice**

#### **Quote:**

**“Spiritual formation is not just about the mind; the body is the primary locus of our habits and character.” - Dallas Willard**

Psychologist Antonio Damasio’s somatic marker hypothesis: bodily states (posture, breath, tension) directly influence rational decision-making and emotional regulation.

How to apply alone:

Set a timer for 5 minutes. Kneel or lie prostrate. Breathe slowly, and on each exhale whisper a name of God (El Shaddai, Jehovah Jireh). Then stand, stretch arms upward, and recite Psalm 121:1–2 aloud.

Repeat every three hours.

## **5. ASK GOD, “WHAT MIGHT I BE WRONG ABOUT?” BEFORE BITTERNESS TAKES ROOT**

When absolutely alone, the most dangerous internal enemy is not sadness but the slow poison of believing you are uniquely abandoned or that God has singled you out for punishment. David could have raged at his men or cursed God. Instead, he likely confessed any hidden sin that might have contributed to his situation (not as false guilt, but as humility). Anticipatory confession means regularly admitting, "I may be partially wrong in how I see this," which keeps the heart soft enough to receive future help.

### **PSALM 32:3–5**

**When I kept silent, my bones wasted away... I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

### **JOB 42:3–6**

**I had heard of you by hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.**

### **1 JOHN 1:8–9**

**If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves... If we confess, he is faithful and just to forgive.**

Psychologist Julie Exline's research on "spiritual struggle" shows that people who can admit their own potential role in a crisis (without self-flagellation) have better long-term outcomes than those who rigidly blame God or others.

How to apply alone:

Write a short prayer: "Lord, I don't understand why I am alone. But I confess any hardness, any hidden resentment, any pride that may be blocking my vision. Show me one way I have contributed to this isolation." Sit in silence for 5 minutes. If nothing comes, thank God for mercy. Then ask again tomorrow.

### **Conclusion**

Encouraging oneself in the Lord is not mystical detachment from pain. It is the gritty, repetitive, and sometimes ugly work of lament, memory, micro-actions, embodied prayer, and humble confession. David did not erase Ziklag's ashes; he moved through them, one step at a time, speaking truth to his own soul until his

men eventually followed again. You can do the same—not because you are strong, but because the Lord is there, even in the silence.