

Unpacking Our Emotional Baggage
A Series on Spiritual & Emotional Health

Sermon Title: Defeating Discouragement

Sermon Notes:

Main Scripture: Have I not commanded you? Be **strong and courageous**. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the **Lord your God will be with you** wherever you go. - Joshua 1:9

Introduction:

*1 Peter 5:8 states, Be sober, **be vigilant**; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

- The Word of God also informs us that we are or should not be ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). The two major devices of the enemy are Distraction and Discouragement. If the enemy can't distract you, He will attempt to discourage you!
- Let's identify, expose, and defeat discouragement today!

I. Discouragement Defined:

- A. Dismayed - to be shattered. [Heb. **חָתַח** **châthath**, khaw-thath'; to break down, either (literally) by violence, or (figuratively) by confusion and fear:—abolish, affright, be (make) afraid, amaze, beat down, discourage, (cause to) dismay, scare, terrify.]
- B. Discouragement is a state of feeling disheartened, demotivated, or lacking confidence. It involves a loss of hope, enthusiasm, or belief in one's abilities or the likelihood of success. When someone is discouraged, they may experience feelings of sadness, frustration, or a sense of defeat. Discouragement can arise from various factors such as setbacks, failures, criticism, or challenging circumstances. It can impact one's motivation, productivity, and overall well-being. Overcoming discouragement often involves finding ways to regain hope, seeking support, and adopting a positive mindset to persevere through difficulties.

II. Biblical Examples of Discouragement:

A. The story of Elijah: In 1 Kings 19, Elijah, a prophet of God, becomes discouraged and depressed after a great victory against the prophets of Baal. He receives a death threat from Queen Jezebel and feels overwhelmed by the circumstances. He flees to the wilderness, feeling alone and hopeless. However, God provides him with sustenance, rest, and encouragement, reminding him of his purpose and assuring him that he is not alone.

B. The story of Job: In the book of Job, Job faces extreme suffering and loss. He loses his children, his wealth, and his health. Job's friends come to console him, but eventually, they start blaming him for his predicament, causing him to feel discouraged and misunderstood. Despite his discouragement, Job remains faithful and continues to seek God's justice and understanding.

C. The story of Moses: In Exodus 3 and 4, Moses is initially discouraged and hesitant when God calls him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He doubts his abilities, expressing feelings of inadequacy and fear. However, God reassures Moses, equips him with miracles, and promises to be with him every step of the way. Through God's encouragement, Moses finds the strength to fulfill his calling and lead the Israelites to freedom.

D. The story of David: 1 Samuel 30:6 states, "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."

III. Discouragement: Physical and Psychological Effects:

A. Physical Effects:

1. Fatigue and Lack of Energy: Feeling discouraged and disheartened can drain one's physical energy, leading to increased fatigue and a lack of motivation to engage in activities.
2. Sleep Disturbances: Discouragement can often disrupt sleep patterns, leading to difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restless sleep. This can further contribute to physical exhaustion and negatively affect overall well-being.
3. Appetite Changes: Some individuals may experience changes in their appetite when feeling discouraged. This can manifest as either increased or decreased appetite, leading to weight gain or loss.
4. Poor Immune Function: Prolonged discouragement and stress can weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses and infections.

B. Psychological Effects:

1. Decreased Self-Esteem: Discouragement can erode one's self-esteem and self-worth. Individuals may start doubting their abilities and worthiness, leading to a negative self-perception.
2. Anxiety and Depression: Prolonged discouragement can contribute to the development or exacerbation of anxiety and depression symptoms. Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and sadness may become more prominent.
3. Lack of Motivation: Discouragement can significantly reduce motivation levels, making it challenging to set and accomplish goals. Individuals may feel apathetic, unmotivated, and may lose interest in activities they previously enjoyed.

4. Negative Thinking Patterns: Discouragement can lead to negative thinking patterns, such as self-criticism, self-doubt, and excessive worry. These patterns can further perpetuate discouragement and make it difficult to break free from negative thought cycles.

5. Social Withdrawal: Feeling discouraged can often result in social withdrawal and isolation. Individuals may distance themselves from friends, family, and social activities, further exacerbating feelings of discouragement.

C. Discouragement can have significant implications on both families and society. Here are some key implications:

1. Family Dynamics: Discouragement within a family can create tension and strain relationships. It can lead to increased conflicts, decreased communication, and a breakdown in trust and support. This can impact the overall well-being and functioning of the family unit.

2. Parenting and Child Development: When parents or caregivers are discouraged, it can affect their ability to provide nurturing and supportive environments for their children. This can have long-term effects on child development, including emotional, social, and cognitive development.

3. Economic Impact: Discouragement can lead to decreased productivity and motivation in the workplace, which can have economic consequences at both the individual and societal levels. It can result in decreased job performance, lower income, and increased dependence on social programs.

4. Social Disengagement: Discouragement can contribute to social withdrawal and isolation, both within families and society. This can result in decreased social cohesion, less community engagement, and increased feelings of loneliness and disconnection.

7. Interpersonal Relationships: Discouragement can impact interpersonal relationships, not only within families but also in friendships, marriages, and professional relationships. It can lead to strained relationships, decreased trust, and difficulty in forming meaningful connections with others.

7. Productivity and Innovation: When discouragement is widespread in society, it can dampen productivity and hinder innovation. Individuals may be less likely to take risks, pursue new opportunities, or contribute their skills and talents to society.

IV. Defeating Discouragement: Spiritual & Practical Steps!

A. Spiritual: Encourage Yourself in the Lord!

1. **Trust in God**: The Bible encourages believers to trust in God's strength and promises. Psalm 42:11 says, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." By placing your trust in God, you can find comfort and renewed hope in challenging circumstances.

2. **Seek God's presence:** The Bible teaches that seeking God's presence through prayer, worship, and reading His Word can bring encouragement and strength. Psalm 16:11 says, "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

3. **Remember God's faithfulness:** The Bible recounts numerous instances where God remained faithful to His people throughout history. Reflecting on these stories and remembering God's faithfulness in the past can provide hope and encouragement in discouraging times. Joshua 1:9 says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

4. **Focus on eternal perspective:** The Bible reminds believers to focus on the eternal perspective rather than being consumed by temporary difficulties. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

5. **Encourage one another:** The Bible emphasizes the importance of community and encourages believers to uplift and support one another. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

B. Some practical steps that can help you overcome discouragement:

1. Identify the Source: The first step is to identify the root cause of your discouragement. Is it a specific situation, a personal failure, or something else? Understanding the source can help you address it more effectively. Discouragement is a secondary emotion typically associated with frustration, disappointment, or sadness.

2. Challenge Negative Thoughts: Discouragement often stems from negative thinking patterns. Practice challenging and reframing negative thoughts with more realistic and positive ones. For example, instead of thinking, "I'll never succeed," replace it with, "I may face setbacks, but I can learn and improve."

3. Set Realistic Goals: Unrealistic expectations or overwhelming goals can contribute to discouragement. Set smaller, achievable goals that you can work towards. Celebrate your progress, no matter how small, to maintain motivation.

4. Take Care of Yourself: Prioritize self-care by getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals, and engaging in regular exercise. Physical well-being can have a significant impact on your mental and emotional state.

5. Seek Support: Reach out to trusted friends, family members, or a counselor for support. Sharing your feelings and experiences with someone who can listen non-judgmentally can provide comfort and encouragement.
6. Break Tasks into Manageable Steps: If you're overwhelmed by a particular task or situation, break it down into smaller, more manageable steps. Focus on one step at a time and celebrate your achievements along the way.
7. Engage in Activities that Bring Joy: Engaging in activities that bring you joy, such as hobbies, spending time with loved ones, or pursuing creative outlets, can help lift your spirits and provide a sense of fulfillment.
8. Practice Gratitude: Cultivate an attitude of gratitude by intentionally focusing on the positive aspects of your life. Regularly expressing gratitude for the blessings you have can shift your perspective and increase feelings of contentment.
9. Seek Professional Help if Needed: If discouragement persists or significantly impacts your daily functioning, consider seeking professional help from a therapist or counselor. They can provide additional guidance and support tailored to your specific needs.

Conclusion:

Whenever you are facing discouragement:

1. Look to God and remember He is with you,
2. Be Determined to **Encourage Yourself in the Lord!** (*1 Samuel 30:6; Psalms 42:11*)
3. Apply the practical steps that fit your situation.
4. Seek out community to both encourage and be encouraged.