

# Dealing With Discouragement

1 Samuel 30:6-8

## Preface

These days I find a lot of people are discouraged. Many people are obviously discouraged about the economy. Others are discouraged about our government and politics as well as children and health issues. Some people are even discouraged about the work of the church. It is easy to become discouraged.

Most of the great people of the Bible dealt with discouragement.

Job is described as the noblest man living in his time, but after the troubles that were his, he cried out, **"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and are spent without hope."**

Moses is described as the most disciplined of men and the greatest of all of the Old Testament personalities. And Moses, when leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, found great discouragement. Moses cried out, **"O Lord, why have you afflicted me? I am not able to bear these people. They are too heavy for me."**

In Nehemiah, the people building the wall said, **"There is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."**

We find similar expressions of discouragement in Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah and Elijah. Even Jesus displayed discouragement, when he came to Jerusalem, the city he loved. Weeping, he said the following:

*"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes." Luke 19:41-42 NIV*

## Scripture

Our text today takes us to David where he has discovered that because of his delay a city has been wiped out.

*<sup>6</sup>David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God. <sup>7</sup>Then David said to Abiathar [uh-bahy-uh-ther] the priest, the son of Ahimelech [uh-him-uh-lek], "Bring me the ephod [ef-fod]." Abiathar brought it to him, <sup>8</sup>and David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?"*

*"Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue." 1 Samuel 30:6-8 NIV*

## Introduction

When David and his men arrived at Ziklag, they found that the Amalekites had completely raided and burned the town. They had taken everyone hostage. They had not killed them but taken them to be slaves.

David and his men were deeply discouraged. The Bible says they wept until they were too weak to weep anymore.

The men were distraught over their families. Some of the men even wanted to take David's life in anger.

But verse 6 tells us *"David found strength in the Lord his God."*

David took 400 men and pursued the captors; 200 men stayed back as they were too weak to travel. God led him to a slave who had been left to die. He nourished the slave back and restored him to health. The slave agreed to lead them to the Amalekites.

David and his men defeated the Amalekites and retrieved all of the plunder that had been taken as well as all of the women and children. Not a single one failed to return with David and his army.

David could have given up but instead, he found strength in the Lord. What if David had not found strength in the Lord?

To be a part of the group of people discouraged is not unique or unusual. **But remaining discouraged can be a costly condition.**

Discouragement is a key weapon of Satan. If he can get you discouraged and wallowing in self pity then he knows you will shutdown.

A discouraged Christian is an ineffective Christian. Discouragement has a way of crippling us, rendering us un-productive.

Today I would like to share 4 principles for dealing with discouragement.

## 1. Take a short look at the problem.

You need to recognize that you are discouraged, but you don't need to focus upon that.

The birds of discouragement may crow and fly about you, but must not allow them to build nests in your hair, if you have any.

Don't focus on your discouragements, because **“as one thinks in one's heart, so one becomes.”**

To major on discouragement soon makes all of life discouraging. Yet, we must at least take a short look at it for two reasons.

1) First, to acknowledge that it's true. There are some individuals who think somehow it's sub-Christian to be discouraged. We need to acknowledge it and recognize that our Lord Jesus himself knew how discouragement feels. So we need to admit that for our own sake.

2) Secondly, to discover whether or not we're the ones who have caused the situation to be discouraging? Many times we are not the cause of our own discouragement. If that is the case, in a moment of discouragement it's important that we know that, so we don't add to the weight of the discouragement; the burden of blame.

You recall when they brought a blind man to Jesus. "Is he blind because of his sin or the sin of his parents?" And Jesus said "Neither, but the will of God might be displayed." Many times we are not the cause of our own discouragement; a quick look will ascertain that.

Illus: There was a farmer in a small town who had a barn, and it burned down. And so he built a new barn, and it blew down. So he decided he would build a third barn better than the other two, and the third barn he built entirely of stone - stone floor, stone walls, stone roof, thousands and tens of thousands of stones. When he was finished, he realized that he had lost the watch that his father had given him when he was young. It was engraved with his name and since his father was no longer living, the watch was of extreme value to him. He now had a great barn but had lost his valuable watch.

Now he was discouraged over the loss of his watch.

There will always be things in life to bring discouragement. We must keep them in perspective and not dwell on them.

**Like David, we can hurt and weep but we must rise up and find strength in the Lord.**

## 2. Remind yourself of all you have going for you.

When we are discouraged, we tend to focus on the one thing that has us discouraged. In doing so, we often overlook a million positive things we have going for us. Instead, we just bath in our discouragement.

Usually, it takes something significant to bring us out of discouragement. Have you ever found yourself being picked up by saying the words, "You think you have it bad until you look around and realize a lot of people have it a lot worse?"

That is a typical response when we begin to realize we have a lot going for us after all.

No doubt David and his men were running all the scenarios around in their heads. If we could have just gotten hear a few days earlier, they might have thought. When David started after the attackers, it was surely discouraging to find that only 400 of his 600 men could go. But he saw 400 willing and able men.

Illus: Just because you miss one train doesn't mean you have to cancel the whole vacation.

Illus: There is a true story about a man sitting on his porch in Kentucky. He's only recently retired from the post office, and he's sitting there when his first Social Security check is delivered. He's very, very discouraged. He thinks to himself, *“Is this what life is going to be from now on—sitting on the porch waiting for my check to arrive?”*

He decided he wouldn't settle for that, and so he made a list of all of the things he had going for him, all the blessings and his capabilities, the unique things that were in him. The list was long because he listed everything he could think of, and in the list was the fact that he was the only person on earth who knew his mother's recipe for great fried chicken.

Eventually Harland Sanders sold the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise across all of America. All of this happened because he quite focusing on his discouragement and took inventory of the things he had going for him.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, but he knew there were important things to be done in that city; things that only he could do. There was a temple to be cleansed. There were teachings to be offered. There was a Last Supper to be had. And there was a cross to be climbed. Only he could do these things, and so he set about the doing of them.

### 3. Remind yourself that you are loved by God.

The third step is to take a long look at God, and be reminded that you are loved dearly by Him.

So often, in our discouragement, Satan begins to play with our thoughts and we lose sight of the enormous love of God for each one of us. We become angry with God.

Illus: Ben Weir was held captive by terrorists in Lebanon for 15 months. Fifteen of those months he was in solitary confinement.

They took him into a small room, where there was a mattress on the floor and a radiator beside it. That was the mattress on which he slept and on which he sat, because one arm was always handcuffed to the radiator. The window had Venetian blinds. There was no other furniture. Interestingly enough, there was an old stuffed bird sitting over in one corner. There were some cracks in the walls, and where there had been a light fixture in the ceiling, it had been taken away and there were three loose wires sticking down. This was all there was in the room.

Ben said, "I began to use what was there to remind myself of the love of God. Those **three wires** coming down—well, they reminded me of the way **God's hand comes down** and touches our lives with love.

He counted the various **slats in the Venetian blinds**, and he used the Venetian blind to remind himself that he was surrounded by a **cloud of witnesses**.

The **bird**, though it was very old and dirty, he used to represent the **Holy Spirit**.

The **cracks in the walls**, each and every one of them he identified with some **promise in Scripture**. He would repeat to himself each day passages which he had long ago hidden in his heart: "*May the peace of God which transcends all understanding guide your heart and your mind into Christ Jesus;*" "*Call upon me and I will do great and wondrous things that you know not of.*"

He remembered all of these things and out of this he kept hold of himself for 15 months alone—a long look, a remembering, a focusing upon the love of God.

There is that magnificent word at the end of the experience on the cross when Jesus says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Remember the love of God.

### 4. Take a long look at the possibilities.

There are almost always possibilities and options. We just need to prayerfully consider them.

**Usually, it is when we have exhausted our resources and reached the end of our rope that we discover the really exciting resources and opportunities that God has for us.**

Illus: There was a woman riding on a train, and she had a dog she liked very much. She had purchased a seat right beside her for the dog to ride in. The man in front was smoking a very foul-smelling cigar, and the smoke was drifting back into the face of the dog. So she tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Sir, would you mind extinguishing your cigar?"

He said, "Madame, there are nonsmoking cars on this train and there are smoking cars. This is a smoking car. If you didn't want me to smoke, you should have been seated in another car. I will continue to enjoy my cigar."

By this time the little dog was coughing and panting, so she tapped him on the shoulder again and said, "You can see it's really troubling my dog. Won't you please put it out?"

And he said, "Madame, I consider my pleasure to be of much more importance than the happiness of your animal. I will not put it out."

By this time the little dog was down on his side. He was white when he got on the train, but he was turning blue. So she reached over and opened the window, and then reached around, yanked the cigar out of the man's mouth, and threw it out the window. He got up, grabbed the dog, and threw it out the window. And she went into hysterics and began to scream, pounding on his back.

The conductor gets them off the train and is trying to sort things out when guess what comes running up? The little dog.

And guess what he has in his mouth?

The valued watch that the farmer had lost?

**You see we often think we know where something is going when we don't. Maybe the thing that has you discouraged will have a better outcome than you imagined.**

**Try to see the possibilities and see what God can do.**

## Conclusion

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 NIV*

Illus: Louis Waterman sold insurance, and when he lost a contract because his pen went out in 1883, he went on to design the Waterman Fountain Pen which was the premier writing instrument of America for over 50 years. Out of discouragement comes, great possibility.

Illus: When Fleming was doing research at St. Mary's hospital in London, he was growing cultures, and a careless laboratory assistant left a window open causing them to become contaminated. Before throwing them out, he notices mold growing there. Out of that Fleming developed penicillin—a possibility out of a discouragement.

Illus: The Franciscans were the first ones to systematically grow grapes in California. They grew the muscat grapes to make muscatel wine. One year they had a terrible drought, and the grapes withered on the vine.

They thought they were going to lose them all, but they took those grapes down into the towns and sold them as what they called "Peruvian delicacies." That was the beginning of the Sun Maid Raisin Company.

Out of what was discouraging came long term good.

Move past your discouragement and experience the love of God. Boldly ask God for his help. Ask for faith to trust him. And look forward to what he will do.

May it be said of you, \_\_\_\_\_ found strength in the Lord his God.