

The Four D's: "Discouragement"

FOR FURTHER STUDY

One of the greatest figures in history made the following statement when he was, by his own admission, disappointed with himself and discouraged. In 1841 he wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were exactly distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall be better, I cannot tell. I actually forbade that I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or be better." (Abraham Lincoln).

People who are on the verge of falling into full blown discouragement normally use words and phrases that are a good indication that discouragement is on the way. For many, they never really recognize the danger signs that are contained in their own words. They say things like...

- . Why is my life like this?
- . Why is everybody happy except me?
- . What is the point of me going on?
- . It's not like I can make a difference.
- . I feel my life has no purpose.
- . If God hears my prayers, why doesn't He answer them?
- . Why has God left me all alone?
- . Why me?
- . Why now?
- . Why this?
- . Why that?

When we speak about discouragement, we must get real at this point. Getting real means that we acknowledge that all of us are susceptible to discouragement, no matter where we are in our spiritual journey. Understanding this allows us to be prepared in advance to take precautionary measures to prevent it. Use the following scriptures to help you in your daily fight against discouragement.

In the message today, we are going to use somewhat of a strange example to make our point. Elijah! At this point, you may be thinking that I have gotten my Bible characters mixed up. Wasn't Elijah the man that raised a widow's son from the dead; prayed and caused it not to rain for more than three years; kept an endless supply of food coming during a famine; called fire down from heaven; and defeated 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the grove on Mount Carmel? Yet, this is the man that was discouraged and on the run just hours after the victory at Carmel.

Scriptures to Read (1 Kings 17, 18, 19)

BAAL WORSHIP

Many people today think that Baal worship only existed thousands of years ago and has no relevance to Christians today. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. Baal worship is in full operation today. According to 1 Kings, Baal worship was actually brought into the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Ahab. Ahab violated the Word of God by marrying a woman named Jezebel. Her father was the King of Tyre and he had earlier introduced Baal worship to his family and his kingdom. By marrying a woman from a heathen nation, the stage was set for disaster.

Baal was the god of sky and weather. He was also the god of sexuality. Baal worship seemed to offer many positive things that the people simply could not resist; secure jobs, paid vacations, excellent benefits, high prices for crops, paid income taxes, free education, financial prosperity, and much more. At the same time, there was a horrible downside to accepting all these benefits. It would demand that each family make a huge

personal sacrifice as we shall see. 1 Kings 17 tells us that most people wanted to hang on to their worship of the true God, but they wanted to add Baal as an equal because of the supposed benefits he was offering. That is why Elijah asked the people, "How long will you halt between two opinions" (1 Kings 17:17-21).

Sadly, there is only one person in the land who believes that the true God is all they really need; Elijah. Little did the people know that in order for them to enjoy all the new benefits of this new religion, each family would be required to sacrifice their first born child on a fiery altar to Baal. At first, this must have seemed like a high price to pay, but soon, it just became the thing people expected you to do. It was no big deal. It is hard to imagine people bringing themselves to literally sacrifice their children simply because they wanted success in life. Even sadder is the fact that we continue to do it today, on the altar of abortion. Fifty million in the United States since 1973; thirty million per year world wide. All in the name of success and being able to do whatever we want to do.

Additional Thoughts and Scriptures

1. God wills that Christians live lives of Encouragement.

Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go".

2 Chronicles 20:15 "Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's".

Galatians 6:9 "Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time".

2. Understand that Discouragement is a part of our Spiritual Warfare.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ".

Ephesians 6:13, 16-17 "Therefore, put on the whole Armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes. You may be able to stand your ground...above all, taking the shield of faith with which, you will be able to quench all of the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God".

3. Put Things in the Perspective of Eternity.

Romans 8:18 "For I consider that the suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us".

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal".

Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my right hand".

Psalms 55:22 "Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall".

4. Fill Your Heart and Mind With the Word of God Daily

Psalms 94:19 "When anxiety was great within me, your consolations brought joy to my soul".

Psalm 119:28 "My soul is weary with sorrow, strengthen me according to thy Word".

John 8:31, 32 "Jesus said, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free".

John 15:14 "Remain in me and I will remain in you".

5. Court Your Many Blessings

Psalm 42:5 "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him my Savior and God".

Psalm 103:2 "Praise the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits..."

Isaiah 26:3 "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because He trusts in you".

Philippians 4:8,9 "Finally brothers, whatsoever is true, whatsoever is noble, whatsoever is right, whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received, or heard from me, or seen in me-put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you".

6. Praise God for His Deliverance

Psalm 9:1 "I will praise You, O Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all His marvelous works".

Psalm 35:28 "My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of all your praises all day long".

Psalm 73:26 "My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever".

7. Scriptures to Claim When You are Discouraged

Psalm 86:7 "I will call to You, whenever trouble strikes, and You will answer me".

Psalm 37:23, 24 "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and he delights in His way. Though he fall, he will not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand".

Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be afraid of them, for the Lord your God, He is the one who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you".

Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon formed against you shall prosper".

Psalm 31:34 "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord".

8. Talk to Others About Your Circumstances

James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed".

James 5:13 "Is any among you in trouble? He should pray".

Numbers 11:17 "I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people, so that you will not have to carry it alone".