

Beat discouragement!

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Positive emotions are considered a goal. They are the key to health, happiness and wellbeing. On the other hand *negative emotions* such as fear, anger, insecurity and discouragement can pollute our life if not resisted. The emotion we feel is a result of choice. Deliberately or not, we *choose* to generate a feeling. This is a freedom that each of us have.

When things don't quite go the way we expect, human nature dictates that we can easily and quickly become discouraged. *Discouragement* is possibly one of the most powerful emotions because it could often lead to a number of other negative consequences. When one is discouraged, he or she could tend to become fearful to face what is laid before them leaving them without courage to go on.

Satan the Devil is the author of discouragement. He prowls around trying every trick in the book to wear us down. As he goes about doing this, he does what he can to see us undermine our faith in God, leading us to give up and give in (1 Peter 5:8). Our strongest defense against Satan is outlined in two verses in the book of James: "Submit yourself therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7-8). We are to acknowledge Satan as our greatest enemy and, most importantly, draw near to God asking Him for help to resist negative thoughts and emotions.

We usually get discouraged because we are far from God. If God is not at the center of our lives, it is easy to allow negative moods and thoughts to take a hold of us which result in discouragement. The closer we are to God, the more we develop a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7). In times of discouragement, we have to trust in God to help us. This requires that we draw on the power of His Holy Spirit.

Here are seven powerful ways, emphasized in the Bible in which we can better stay close to God and conquer discouragement:

Pray every day and as often as you can

Prayer is fundamental to our well being. It is a force and a tool which must be used to give us stability and strength. "Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time (persistently); thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you to live who belong to Christ Jesus" (1 Thess 5:16-18, *The Message Bible translation*).

Recognize God's presence

We must never allow ourselves to feel alone - this is Satan's plot to get us discouraged. God always knows *everything* that goes on in our lives! "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

Exercise the Holy Spirit and respond to its lead

If we are being led by God, we will be moved to seek Him. We must develop the habit of responding immediately to the influence of God's Holy Spirit, this way God's thoughts will flood our minds. "I made haste and delayed not to keep your commandments" (Psalm 119:60).

We must engage in daily Bible study

The more we study the Bible, the more we take on the mind of God. The Bible is replete with examples of people who put their faith and trust in God when faced with seemingly overwhelming trials and pressures. Each of these biblical examples demonstrate such

powerful and positive fruit that they should serve as lessons of encouragement to each of us. "Study to show thyself approved...rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

Live the way of give

Discouragement often begins when we start to focus on self! When we fill our minds with our own thoughts, we undeniably push out the thoughts of God and resist the 'give' way of life. This results in a blurring of God's viewpoint which can quite easily overwhelm us. To offset this we must live the way of give beginning by simply giving happiness to others! "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Each day must count

Paul admonishes us to redeem the time. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil" (Eph 5:15-16). The NIV translates verse 16 as, "making the most of every opportunity". We mustn't allow ourselves to get complacent, but use every moment as if it were our last! Use every day that God gives us as an urgent opportunity to grow in His character. We need to strive to accomplish as much as we can in the window of time God has blessed us with. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (Matt 24:46).

Put God first - always!

Those in the Church should *expect* difficulties! Acts 14:22 firmly states: "Confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and *that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*". We must never allow problems to get the better of us – if they do, simply put, God is not first in our life! The Apostle Paul wrote "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to be in plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. *I can do everything through Him who gives me strength*" (Phil. 4:11-13 NIV). God will never leave nor forsake us (Heb 13:5). He will always deliver us (Psalm 34:19) if we put Him first in our lives!

Satan wants us to focus on the negative in any and every situation. If and when we allow this to happen, fear, anger, insecurity and so many other negative emotions over take us. Discouragement ensues and Satan wins a battle. God's way is that of looking for the silver lining in every dark cloud. This resists Satan, gets us closer to God and helps us win the war!

Let's use the tools God has placed at our disposal, and do all we can, to take on and exude His emotion of COURAGE!