

Talks - Discouragement – myfishbites.com

Discouraged

Have you ever felt discouraged in your Christian life and what you're doing for God? I'm sure you have – even Elijah the prophet was depressed in 1 Kings 19 and we look at him and think he was super-spiritual! This is despite the fact that James 5.17 tells us Elijah was a man like us...

Many Christians have felt discouraged and it's one of the devil's strategies for pulling us down and making us feel that what we're doing can't make any kind of difference. But this is a total lie. Your every action of faith for Jesus makes a massive difference – it's just that we don't see the difference we make. The evil one wants you to be discouraged because he thinks he can stop you doing good for God that way!

In this talk, we'll look at 2 examples from the Bible – one from the New Testament and a story from the Old Testament. This will help us see God's heart, encourage us and help us!

Galatians 6.9-10: The challenge, the reward and the antidote

Galatians 6.9-10 says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

This is a promise and a challenge to keep going and not be discouraged.

The Amplified Bible translates Galatians 6.9 as, "And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint."

God promises that there will come a point, a season when what we do will be rewarded by him. He sees everything we do for him. He will reward us way beyond anything we can imagine!!

Galatians 9.10 gives us a clue about how to not be discouraged – the Bible tells us to get our eyes off ourselves by being a blessing to others – that means doing good things for others.

The Amplified says, "So then, as occasion and opportunity open up to us, let us do good [morally] to all people [not only] being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage]. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith [those who belong to God's family with you, the believers]."

The Bible encourages us to do good towards other people on every level and in every way – physically and spiritually. The Bible encourages us to intentionally be a blessing to others – think about what you can do to be Jesus to other people. Can you smile at someone, say hi to someone who looks down, pay for someone's coffee, speak to a homeless person, be kind to someone, send someone a text or card to say you're thinking of them or to encourage them..

This kindness is to everyone – but Galatians encourages us to focus on God's family. Why? Not to be inward looking but because Jesus knows that the church will face discouragement and wants the world to know who he is by demonstrating his church as a place of love towards one another. As people see you and the church as a place of change, love, community, inter-connectedness and strength – we will reflect God and people will want to know him!

Finally, we have to keep going, to persevere, to be faithful and patient. All these words aren't ones we like talking about as they sound dull, a bit dry and even a bit old fashioned. But as we hold on and keep going, so we encourage those around us and so God walks with us. Your perseverance will be a testimony in itself and as you hold on, God will transform you. The only way with God is forwards and up!

1 Samuel 25: David, Nabal and Abigail

1 Samuel 25 is about a King-in-waiting (David), an ignorant and mean man (Nabal) and his "intelligent and beautiful" wife (Abigail), verse 3. David and his men have been looking out for and defending Nabal, his property and possessions. David and his men needed supplies and food, so having looked after Nabal's stuff, he sent a message to Nabal asking him to be favourable towards David and his men. Now, you would think that Nabal would be grateful to David, especially considering David had acted so honourably towards him and would be the future King. But unfortunately, Nabal was a selfish and stupid man and he refused to give David anything and even disrespected him saying, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse?" (verse 10-11).

David was understandably miffed about this and got his 400 men together to give Nabal a good kicking. In fact, David vowed that every male in the household of Nabal would be killed. But on the way there, one of Nabal's canny servants spoke to Abigail and let her know what was going on. Abigail quickly put together a load of stuff for David, and sent the servants ahead of her to present all the goodies to David and her men. She then headed off herself to meet him – she articulated a great speech, apologised and put things right with David before anything happened. She also gave credit to the Lord God and recognised David's authority from God. David was so impressed by her actions that in verse 33 he said to Abigail, *"May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands."* Later, Abigail told her husband Nabal and he had a heart attack. 10 days later he died. David gave glory to God that God had fought his cause and asked Abigail to be his wife.

So what's the point? That God sees everything and will reward you!

The main point is this: in verse 21, as David was heading towards Nabal's household to repay Nabal for his evil, he was discouraged. David said to himself, *"It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good."*

At that moment in time, David felt down. We know that David and his men had acted in a very Godly way towards Nabal's men. David's men hadn't stolen anything and they didn't mistreat Nabal's men (verse 7). Nabal's servant testified that *"these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them."* (verses 15-16). Yet despite all of this, Nabal had "hurled insults" at David (verse 14). David thought, 'Lord, I've done all this good for this man and yet he's thrown it all back in my face, refusing to help me. What was the point of me doing all this..?'

Isn't that how we often feel? We can feel – what's the point in all I've done, Lord? You may have done lots of things for God – helping out at church, giving money, helping fight injustice, praying, always being at church and youth group, looking out for others. But then things don't go as we expect them to and sometimes we cry out to God, asking 'what's all this about? Why me?'

This is how David felt. But what he didn't know was that his miracle, God's answer was right around the corner. Little did he know that the servants were on their way to him at that very moment bringing provisions beyond what he could have imagined.

The message is that God had David's situation in hand. He didn't scream and shout and blame God. But he didn't know quite how God was going to provide for him and reward him. But God did reward him! And later, he would find himself a beautiful and intelligent wife, Abigail. God will reward you for all that you do. He sees everything, he knows everything and he is a good God who wants to bless his people who seek after him. Time after time, if we fit God's conditions, he promises to be good. This is not for our own selfishness, but because God (like any good father) loves his children and wants to be good to them – and that we too can be good to others to reflect him and bring glory to him.

For Bible verses, see Matthew 6.33, Psalm 37.4, Matthew 7.11, Hebrews 11.6.

Abigail's miracle by her Godly actions and serving others

When Abigail came along, she made a great impression on David. How do we know this? Well, we learn in 1 Samuel 25.39-40, David sent word to Abigail asking her to be his wife. She accepted and in verse 42, she became David's wife.

Because of what she did – acting with integrity, acting wisely, humbling herself by taking the blame for her husband (in verse 24 she said *“My lord, let the blame be on me alone.”*) and by serving David and his men, God rewarded her too. Abigail was no longer married to a foolish and wicked man, but instead became the wife of King David.

So Abigail got her miracle and reward, as well as David had earlier. You see, as Hebrews 11.6 says – God is a rewarder of those who seek him with all their heart.

Conclusion

1 Corinthians 15.58, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

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.”

You have been given power from the Bible to throw off wrong thinking and not to be discouraged. As we work with God, he'll open up new doors for you and help you throw off the wrong thinking of discouragement! So don't lose heart and don't be discouraged – God is working for you and with you. He will reward his people in different ways and at different times (and definitely in heaven one day!) so keep going. God promises that if we work with him, he will reward us. Nothing you do for God is ever wasted, so it's time to get some rest then step out in the authority God's given you, serve others, look outside of yourself, make a difference. Then watch what God does in you, through you and for you!