

DISCOURAGEMENT

The **root word** for **discouragement** as well as for **encouragement** is “**courage**” which, according to Webster, means:

- “The **attitude** of **facing** and **dealing with** anything recognized as **dangerous, difficult** or **painful** instead of **withdrawing** from it.”
 - **Courage** is **not** the **absence of fear**, but rather the **decision** to **act** in spite of the fear
- **Discouragement** then is a **sapping of one’s courage**
 - And **encouragement** is a **boost in one’s courage**

After Moses died, the **Lord** spoke to **Joshua** and told him to “*arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving them*” (Joshua 1:2)

- The Lord recognized that Joshua may have been **discouraged** over the death of his **beloved mentor Moses**, so the Lord **encouraged** him 3 times
 - “**Be strong** and of **good courage**, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only **be strong** and **very courageous**, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:6-7)
 - “Have I not commanded you? **Be strong** and of **good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**” (Joshua 1:9)
 - “Whoever **rebels** against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be **put to death**. Only **be strong** and of **good courage.**” (Joshua 1:18)

There are three good examples in the book of Numbers that show the **results of discouragement**

Read Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33, and 14:1-35

This is the account of Moses sending out **12 men** to **spy out** the land of Canaan

- 10 of the 12 said that the land was good, but the people were **too big and too strong** and they **discouraged** the Israelites from **doing what the Lord had told them to do**
- Only **Joshua** and **Caleb** remained **confident in the Lord**
 - Then **Caleb** quieted the people before Moses, and said, “**Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.**” (Numbers 13:30)
 - **Joshua said:** “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, then **He will bring us into this land and give it to us**, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ Only **do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.**” (Numbers 14:7-9)
- How did the people **react**? They wanted to **stone** Joshua and Caleb
- What were the **results**? They had to **wander the desert for 40 years** until **all were dead** except Joshua and Caleb!
 - **Discouragement** led to **rebellion** against the Lord which led to **complaining** and then to the **discipline of the Lord**

Read Numbers 21:1-6

After a great **victory** the Israelites became **discouraged** and began to **complain again** just as they had numerous times right after **great miracles and victories**

- That's why Scripture **encourages** us to **remember** all the things **God** has done for us
 - *O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, and from the heights of Hermon, from the Hill Mizar. (Psalm 42:6)*
 - *And I said, "This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds. (Psalm 77:10-11)*
- This is how we **overcome discouragement**. However, in this example, the children of Israel **did not remember** but **complained instead**, so the Lord **punished** them with "**fiery serpents**" and many of them died.

Read Numbers 32:1-24

Here the tribes of **Reuben** and **Gad** wanted to **remain** in the **good land** for their herds instead of **continuing on** across the Jordan with the other 10 tribes

- But Moses realized this would **discourage** the others
 - *"Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them?" (Numbers 32:6-7)*
- He then **reminded them** of what happened when the **10 spies discouraged** all of Israel from going up into the **Promised Land**, as discussed in the example above (Numbers 13 & 14)
 - *"And look! You have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel. ¹⁵For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people." (Numbers 32:14-15)*
- They then **heeded Moses** who told them that they could **return to this land** after they had **completed the mission** to which the **Lord God had called them**
 - *Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD." (Numbers 32:20-22)*

Be Like David!

Instead of giving into **discouragement**, we must **remember** that "**if God is for us, who can be against us?**" (Romans 8:31)

- This is the attitude **David**, a shepherd boy of small stature, displayed **against Goliath**
 - *Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1Samuel 17:26)*
 - *Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands." (1Samuel 17:45-47)*

Scriptural Antidotes to Discouragement

The cure for discouragement is to **Pray, Praise & Proclaim**

- **Pray** to the Lord for **encouragement**
- **Praise Him** knowing that **He will deliver you**
- **Proclaim the Word** – the **promises to yourself and your authority to the devil**

The Scriptures tell us:

- Paul prayed that the hearts of the Colossians “*may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the **full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,** ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Col. 2:2)
 - We are all to be **encouragers** whose hearts are “*knit together in love*” because “*love never fails*” (1Corinthians 13:8)
 - For **encouragement** we must turn to the “*full assurance*” we get from the “*knowledge of the mystery of God*” which we receive from **God’s Word**
- *Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!* (Psalm 27:14)
 - If we do everything according to the **Lord’s will and His timing**, then we have **nothing to fear**
 - As we **wait on Him** for the orders to proceed, **He will strengthen your heart with courage** to do whatever it is that He is calling you to do
 - For this to happen, we must **stay in the Word and in prayer**
- *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”* (Hebrews 12:3-5)
 - Here we are **encouraged to go through the trial** because **Jesus Himself** has showed the way
 - Many such trials are to **refine us in the fire** and therefore we should not **avoid nor complain nor get discouraged** about the **chastening of the Lord**
 - We **overcome** “*by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [our] testimony, and [we do] not love their lives to the death.*” (Revelation 12:11)
 - In other words, it is the **Lord who enables us to be overcomers** if we **keep our testimony pure** and if we **don’t worry about life or death** because we have **eternal joy awaiting us!**
 - *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Hebrews 12:2)