

Dealing With Discouragement

All of us have experienced discouragement sometime in our life. We have high hopes, eager expectations, and fond dreams only to have them dashed to pieces by circumstances beyond our control.

Our Dilemma

We hadn't planned it this way.

We depended on others and they failed us.

We needed health and strength and they failed.

We needed resources and they failed.

We needed encouragement and received criticism.

The question is, how do we take the disappointments and discouragements of life and turn them into victory?

Discourage means to deprive of courage, to obstruct by opposition and difficulty. There is a discipline that can come to us by correctly handling discouragement. Discipline means the training effect of experience or adversity.

We have a clear illustration in the life of Paul that demonstrates how to take discouragement, be disciplined by it, and turn it into victory.

"Now when I arrived at Troas (to preach) the good news (the Gospel) of Christ, a door of opportunity was opened for me in the Lord, yet my spirit could not rest (relax, get relief) because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave from them and departed for Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph as trophies of Christ's victory — and through us spreads and makes evident the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere" (2 Corinthians 2:12-14).

Paul, expecting to find Titus in Troas, could not rest in spirit (became discouraged). His response?

1. He went on to the next thing: I took leave from them and departed for Macedonia (verse 13).
2. He expressed thankfulness: But thanks be to God (verse 14a).
3. He claimed victory: who in Christ ALWAYS leads us in triumph — as trophies of Christ's victory — (verse 14a).
4. He was assured of God's help: through us spreads and makes evident the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere (verse 14b).
5. There was an afterward: For even when we arrived in Macedonia we were oppressed in every way but God who comforts and encourages and cheers the depressed and the sinking, comforted and encouraged and refreshed and cheered us by the arrival of Titus (2 Corinthians 7:5a,6).

Through this we can see a clear demonstration of how we too, can be disciplined by discouragement.

1. Put the discouragement behind you and go on to the next thing. Others need you, rise up, go on and find in that, the life of victory.
2. Thank God — In everything give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Thank God beforehand for whatever He allows to come into your life.
3. Claim victory — It is never God's will for you to fail but only to learn what He desires to teach you in the midst of adverse circumstances.
4. Be assured of God's help — But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me (2 Timothy 4:17a).
5. Afterward — All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but

sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

For every disappointment there is a delight.

For every trial a triumph.

For every anguish an afterward.

The real test of our life in Christ is not our reactions and witness in the good times, but the living of a life of victory in times of adversity, disappointment, or discouragement.

May you walk in victory and may your life be "the sweet fragrance of Christ (which exhales) unto God" (2 Corinthians 2:15).