



SERIES: MY LIFE WITH GOD

Finding God's Grace in Times of Discouragement

Life Reference: Isaiah 43:1-3

Focus Verse:

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness," (II Corinthians 12:9).

"In my mind, being discouraged was for wimps, an excuse for not taking your responsibilities as a Christian seriously. I had heard some people say that they were discouraged and heard others describe a wide variety of symptoms as discouragement, but I had never heard of a remedy. It was treated, it seemed, like a cold— a condition that would go away eventually, whether you did anything about it or not."

(From a Christian struggling with discouragement)

Although distinctly different, discouragement and disappointment are strongly related. Discouragement comes when a situation has robbed us of confidence. It can be the product of many things: anger, hurt, resentment, frustration, failure or a myriad of other circumstances. Each of these situations carries with it a level of disappointment.

- Disappointment tears at our faith.
- It hampers our ability to believe in ourselves, others, or God.
- It leaves us vulnerable to personal and spiritual attack.



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- It steals our courage.

Sometimes, a single event can affect us so deeply that we are thrust into a time of discouragement. More often, though, our courage slips slowly and silently away through a series of events. We become fragile, unmotivated, and anxious. Feelings of isolation and a general sense of weariness may settle over our spirit.

Life Reflection:

Can you think of a time of deep discouragement in your life?

What circumstances do you feel caused your discouragement?

What emotions did you feel?

When we are discouraged, our faults, failures and imperfections are glaringly obvious to us. Negative thoughts come more easily than positive ones. It is not our reality; it is our perception. Discouragement, and the feelings of worthlessness it cultivates, can send us into hiding and render us helpless. Feelings of inadequacy can overtake us in waves, or torment us with drip-like rhythms.

It is difficult to remember during these times that our walk with God, our faith, and our trust in Him do not prevent us from experiencing disappointment, tragedy, or calamity.

The Bible heroes we read, preach, and teach about experienced heartache, pain, disappointment and discouragement. They were flesh and blood, like us. Their stories are there as examples to us.

The prophet Elijah had recently raised a boy from the dead, arranged a flamboyant display of the power of God against the prophets of Baal, slain 450 of them, and outrun a chariot. Yet, after a death threat from Jezebel, he fled in fear to the desert. Finding a juniper tree, he sat down and prayed that the Lord would just let him die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said (I Kings 19:4 NIV).





Life Reflection:

Has there ever been a time when you, like Elijah, cried out to God, "Enough"?

In such a situation, what positive response can a person choose to make?

Like Elijah, we sometimes feel that we have had enough, have lost our value, and should be replaced by a newer, better, shinier model. Then to our weakness, God brings strength. To our turmoil, He speaks peace. To our confusion, He brings clarity. To our hopelessness, He brings vision and a plan for our future.

Life Response:

In our walk with God, disappointments will come and discouragement may follow. However, we are only slaves to our circumstances when we remove God from them. There are times when things are patently out of our control. There are other times when God simply wants us to relinquish control and trust Him with our lives.

Life Reflection:

How do you usually react to tough times?

What can you do to increase your dependence upon the Lord?

When life seems uncertain and we aren't sure what our next step will be, fear can imprison our courage. Nevertheless, there are steps we can take to prevent and overcome the onslaught of discouragement.



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- **Recognize the signs:** Sometimes we feel uneasiness in our spirit, but cannot discern the origin. These feelings can affect our attitude and our demeanor. Pray that God will show you what is disturbing you. It may be as simple as an untimely or off-hand comment, or it could be something of spiritual significance.
- **Know your enemy.** Disappointment and discouragement can create division in our relationships. Whether they are familial, professional, or church relationships, we need to guard against casting blame. The adversary is not your loved one or co-worker. We cannot approach the enemy on a carnal level and be victorious.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Corinthians 10:4).

- **Praise, Worship, and Pray.** Take time to mentally separate yourself from your situation and spend time with the Lord. He may not remove you from your circumstance, but He will guide you through it.

**"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him,"
(Psalm 62:1 NIV).**

- **Use the Word.** When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He did not get into a showdown of power with Satan. He simply quoted the Word (Matthew 4). This tactic is still effective.
- **Go to church, even when you don't feel like it.** The importance of the ministry in our lives is evidenced by the value placed on it in Scripture. God has placed leaders and fellow Christians in our lives. Allow God to minister to you through the preached Word and through the fellowship of believers.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

- **Recall God's faithfulness in your past.** When Joshua called on the children of Israel to make a commitment to serve God, they recounted their history as their reason for continuing to serve Him (Joshua 24:16-17).

When David faced Goliath in battle, his confidence was not in his own strength or prowess, but in his past experience with God (I Samuel 17:37). His previous encounters with deliverance gave him the courage and assurance that the Lord would be with him again.

"When I remember thee ... because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice" (Psalm 63:6-7).





- **Find the humor or irony in your situation.** In spite of what people may tell you, you will never look back and laugh at some events in your life. However, sometimes, in the midst of our troubles, there is humor to be found. Do not be afraid to laugh at the absurdity of your situation. It doesn't negate your pain, but research has proven what the Word of God says:

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine," (Proverbs 17:22).

- **Wait on the Lord.** There is no greater temptation during a time of discouragement than the one to hurry God. It is in us to avoid suffering. It is in us to revel in our strengths. But, the Lord is not afraid of our weakness.

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14).

Life Reflection:

What situation are you now facing that you can apply the above steps to overcome your discouragement?

What action can you take this week that will start you on your way?

There are few things in life that are exclusive to us. Others have gone before you. They have suffered and wept. They have felt sadness, discouragement and fear. They have been abused and abandoned. They have felt worthless and hopeless. They have wanted to give up. But, because they didn't, they have found that:

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (I Peter 5:10).





My Prayer:

Lord, You have promised that when I am weak, You are my strength. You said that though I fall, I will not be cast down because You will hold me with Your hand. Thank you, Lord, that I do not face times of discouragement and disappointment alone. You have promised to never leave me or forsake me. I place my trust in You and believe that these circumstances will be the means to draw me into a closer relationship with You. (Taken from II Corinthians 12:9, Psalm 37:24, Hebrews 13:5.)

More Life with God References:

Psalm 34:17-19
Matthew 10:30-31
Ephesians 6:12-13
I Thessalonians 3:2
II Corinthians 12:9

(Adapted from *This Is Life . . . And I Need More Answers*, ©2006,
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