

Renewal in Encouragement – Tino Todino - 21st June 2015

Encouragement –

- the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope.
- persuasion to do or to continue something.
- the act of trying to stimulate the development of an activity, state, or belief.

We all need to be encouraged from time to time. We benefit when we receive support, confidence and hope and also when we provide it to others. We thrive when we are in an environment of hope and when we know that we do not face our difficulties on our own.

- Encouraged people stick out a mile. They are contagious, they lift atmospheres, they strengthen others faith and they sow hope.
- Discouraged people do the opposite. They are still contagious, but they darken atmospheres, they weaken others faith, and they sow hopelessness.

So we need to be people who become encouraged and learn how to encourage others.

Most of the time we have people in our lives that God puts there for this purpose. Close friends, family members, confidants etc. However, sometimes there is no one available to us except God and at these times we need to know how to deal with discouragement and encourage ourselves in the Lord.

5 keys to spiritual recovery from discouragement, despair and grief.

Listen to this story:

1 Samuel 30: 1-19

KJV says 'David encouraged himself in the LORD his God'.

David and his band of soldiers had just returned home to Ziklag, only to find that it had been burned with fire, and their wives and children carried off by the Amalekites. "Discouraged" is not a big enough word to describe the state of their morale. This must have been the worst day in David's life.

Through this story the bible shows us how to recover from discouragement, despair and hopelessness.

1. They wept.

The Bible says he and his men wept bitter tears until they simply had no more power to weep. For David, it was even worse, for he was their leader, and his men were so consumed by grief that there was even talk of stoning him.

It is OK to weep when you are in a trial. Weeping is not a sign of weakness, nor is it a sign of a lack of faith. Emotions are God given and a natural response to grief, despair and a loss of hope is to weep. However if we are to recover our weeping must only be for a season and we must learn to move past our 'dark night of the soul'.

The bible says:

Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning. (PSALM 30:5)

A night of weeping but a dawn of faith where we can and need to rejoice in God once again. If you hold onto grief and discouragement for too long it can turn into self-pity. Self-pity is deadly. It has the capacity to destroy your faith and lock you in a self-imposed exile that is difficult to escape from.

To turn your despair into hope, to turn your tragedy into triumph, you will have to move beyond weeping.

2. Don't get bitter.

Now David was finding out how fickle people can be, even people he helped immensely. **Now they had forgotten all that David had done for them.** Now they spoke of stoning David. What had happened? **They had allowed bitterness to infect their souls.** The nature of the flesh is to find **someone to blame when you are in trouble.** Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent, and people have been blaming somebody else ever since. The blame game belongs to a bitter spirit. When trouble hits, the first thing many people do is get bitter and then **blame someone else-usually the leader. This is one of the perils of leadership. Often, bitter people target the leader for blame.** Bitterness does not belong on the road of recovery. When the worst day of your life hits, you cannot afford to get bitter. If you allow trouble to make you bitter, you are in for worse trouble!

Bitterness begins as a seed of offense. When you are offended, a negative seed is sown in your heart. If you choose to walk in forgiveness, you stay connected to grace, and that seed is eradicated from your heart by the flow of God's grace. This required a definite resolve on David's part, an act of his volition. To default on this decision would only have deepened his distress, and discouragement would have rendered him helpless. What is more, the wives and children of him and his men would have been lost forever.

3. Encourage (strengthen) yourself in the Lord

As David sat among the ruins of Ziklag and mutinous men spoke of stoning him, he had a choice. David could allow grief and bitterness to conquer him; he could sink into the black hole of depression and give up and quit. Or he could fight back. But before David could fight, he would have to get his strength and courage back.

As David looked around him, he saw nothing but discouraged and downcast men. David had no one to encourage him, so he had only one recourse: he "encouraged himself in the LORD his God."

It is interesting to note that when people encounter difficult times they tend to go to 'something' to receive the comfort they need. That something may be a person, a hobby, a distraction, or even something instantly gratifying like an addiction. But only in God is recovery truly found.

From what we know of David, I think it is very easy to surmise how David went about encouraging himself. David took his harp, retreated to a solitary place, and **began to sing songs of praise to God.** No doubt David didn't feel like singing, but he did it anyway. To sing was simply a choice that David made. David didn't sing a sad lament bemoaning his situation. Instead, David sang of the majesty and power of God. He sang of the Creator who had spoken the worlds into existence. He sang of the deliverer who had already given him improbable victories - **victory over the lion, victory over the bear, and victory over the Philistine giant Goliath.**

Through praise and worship, David changed his focus. On the wings of a song his spirit was lifted above his present circumstances into the presence of the One who is high and lifted up. The melodies

of David's harp filled the air as the sweet psalmist of Israel sang praises to the God of heaven who transcends human limitation and is forever seated upon the throne of the universe.

David MAGNIFIED the Lord. God doesn't get any bigger or smaller in reality. He will always be God and you can't get greater than Omniscience, Omnipresence and Omnipotence. However our PERSPECTIVE of God can and does change. We make God bigger or smaller than the issues we face by whatever perspective we view from.

When we focus our attention on God and praise we have no space for grumbling, complaining or speech that magnifies the problem. This is the language of faith that brings hope into our situations.

Paul and Silas in prison – Praised and were delivered "The foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed" (Acts 16:26).

Encouraging yourself in the Lord is part of how you go about recovering your joy--not the shallow, mercurial feeling of happiness, but deep, abiding joy, which can be present even in the midst of sorrow. I know the idea of having joy in the midst of sorrow may seem paradoxical, but truth is in the paradox. If you are going to come through whatever trial you face among the first things you have to recover is your joy.

In order to defeat you, the devil knows he must steal your joy. Satan is quite aware of the spiritual truth concerning joy revealed in Nehemiah: **"Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).**

What the devil is after through excessive grief and lingering depression is your strength--the strength that is found in the joy of the Lord. Peter talks about the devil utilizing a stalking strategy analogous to a lion stalking its prey. The devil "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil may be like a lion--not as a metaphor for majesty but as an opportunist seeking to prey upon the weak and feeble. Satan does not want a confrontation with strength; he seeks to exploit weakness.

James said that in order to count it all joy when you fall into a trial, you must know the divine purpose of trials--producing patience (see James 1:3). Your trial is a test--a test of your faith. The testing of our faith produces something--it produces patience and when you have it you will be complete, lacking nothing.

We all enjoy telling our own stories of God's deliverances, but without a test, there is no deliverance, no story, no testimony. Every glorious testimony that inspires the faith of others begins with a test. In the midst of a trial, the object is to turn the test into a testimony.

4. Get a word from God

Now that David begin to recover his strength and renew his perspective it was time to figure out what on earth to do. His men, many of whom were previously ready to stone him were now once again looking to David for the answer. So what did David do?

He called for the priest, laid down his weapons and armour, put on the priestly ephod and enquired of the Lord (he waited).

When we are in difficult times the most important thing we need to hold onto is our faith. Faith IS the victory that overcomes the world. But faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. In difficult times we need a RHEMA living word of God that comes in our moment of need, a Kairos moment.

On your worst days, it's easy for your mind to run wild and for a thousand different thoughts to come crashing into your mind. This is not the word of the Lord. The rhema word of God in your kairos moment is something spoken to you by the Spirit of God in the deep recesses of your spirit. It is a word that resonates in your spirit, **and you know that you know that God has spoken.**

Those types of word release peace and rest in your soul.

For David it was these words that filled his heart:

“Pursue for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all”

In that Word God gave David everything he needed to turn his tragedy into triumph. At that moment he was able to reorient his vision and see that God wanted him to recover all. We too need that word from God to reorient our vision from the situation to the God's solution. When David's men saw him remove the ephod and put the armour and weapons back on; when they heard from him what God had said their vision and passion was once again restored and hope came flooding back.

‘We are going to get our wives and children back, we are going to recover everything that was lost; Put on your armour and sharpen your weapons men, we are going to war’

We need our vision and passion renewed in order to strengthen us for the action that will see us recover all.

5. Attack!

Now you have received the word from God, have had your vision renewed, and your passion rekindled, it is time to go on the offensive and attack.

It is important to understand that our battle is a spiritual one not a carnal one. In the physical realm we are called to love our enemy, forgive, pray for those that persecute us and bless those who would wish us harm. This is part of spiritual battle, to model the reality of the kingdom of God in the physical realm.

Physical armour, Swords, Pistols, Rifles and bombs are not required in a spiritual battle. What is required though is:

- The Word of God.

The Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. In the Book of Revelation, the glorified Christ is described as having a sword that proceeds from His mouth.¹ Jesus wins His battle, not with the carnal sword of military armament, but with the spiritual sword of the Word of God. The Word of God becomes a sword of the Spirit when it has been hidden in your heart and spoken with your mouth.

- The Name of Jesus

He has the name above every name. At the name of Jesus EVERY knee shall bow.

- The blood of Jesus

The blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony.

- Prayer and Praise

To silence the enemy and avenger

- The cross of Christ

The single greatest demonstration of the wisdom and power of God enacted through unrelenting unconditional love. The deep wisdom of God that none of the principalities or powers understood. It is the power of God to all those that believe!