

How to *Encourage Yourself* in the LORD

by Jeff Doles

David encouraged himself in the LORD his God. (1 Samuel 30.6 KJV)

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. The Bible says they 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. He was in distress, and it might have destroyed him completely, except for this: David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

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.

So David chose encouragement, not only to *be* encouraged—for there was no one around him who could, or would, do that for him—but to encourage *himself*. The most important thing to notice here, though, is that David did not encourage himself in himself. Rather, the Scripture says that he encouraged himself *in the LORD his God*. You see, this was not just about David, for David had a covenant with God, and that made this whole thing God’s business. Having thus encouraged himself, David was then able to move on to the solution God had prepared for this problem.

BEFORE WE GO ON AND TALK ABOUT ENCOURAGEMENT, there are a couple of things we need to understand about discouragement. First, discouragement does not come from the Lord, it comes from our adversary the devil. That is why David could encourage himself in the Lord, because the Lord was the source of his solution, not the source of his problem.

Second, discouragement is an indication that we are walking by sight, not by faith. Paul said, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5.7), and that was the source of his stability and strength. When we walk by faith, with our confidence in the Lord and his promises, it is impossible to be discouraged. But when we walk by sight, trusting in our senses, our feelings and our own understanding, we easily fall prey to all the deceptions of the world, the flesh and the devil. When we find ourselves in discouragement, we discover where we have been placing our trust. The solution is to put our trust back in the Lord.

Paul said that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10.17). So when discouragement comes and you find that you have been walking by sight instead of by faith, head back to the Scriptures and let the promises of God build your faith back up to strength.

GOD WANTS YOU TO BE ENCOURAGED AND HE HAS GIVEN YOU THE MEANS BY which you can encourage yourself in Him.

- ① Recognize that you do not have to stay discouraged. It may be like a bird that flies over your head, but you do not have to let it nest in your hair. You can be encouraged, and in fact, you can encourage yourself.
- ② Remember that, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in covenant with God, and He has committed Himself to take care of you in every situation. When the circumstances of life pressed in on David, David pressed in on the benefits of his covenant relationship with God. He briefly outlined these in Psalm 103.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103.2-5)

③

Stop giving voice to your discouragement and start giving voice to your encouragement. Stop repeating the lies of the devil and start speaking the promises of God. Stop speaking out of fear and start speaking in faith. Stop talking about the problems and start talking about the solution. Find out what the Word of God has to say about your situation, then start speaking it, rather than your feelings.

④

Meditate on the Lord. One of the Hebrew words for “meditate” literally means to murmur, and implies the moving of the lips. Another word means to converse with yourself. It is your “self-talk,” the way you speak to yourself about the things in your life. Everybody meditates on something, but often it is on the wrong thing, on the wrong person, or with the wrong focus.

You see, meditation is not a matter of positive thinking, and neither is encouragement. Rather, they are both matters of faith. It is not about us, but about Him. Let your meditation be about the Lord, about His love, His Word, His promises, His goodness, His works. As you do, you will be able to cast your cares on the Lord, with strong confidence that He cares about everything going on in your life (1 Peter 5.7).

We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, in the midst of Your temple. (Psalm 48.9)

But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. (Psalm 59.16)

I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, and my spirit makes diligent search. (Psalm 77.6)

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 77.11,12)

May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD. (Psalm 104.34)

I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your Word. (Psalm 119.15,16)

Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119.97)

My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your Word. (Psalm 119.148)

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. (Psalm 143.5)

I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works. (Psalm 145.5)

⑤ Get in the presence of the Lord. "Give thanks to the Lord. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise" (Psalm 104.4). This requires a quality decision: I will give thanks. I will praise.

Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8.10). David said to the Lord, "In Your presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16.11). When we get into the presence of the Lord we will find all the strength we need and encouragement for every circumstance.

⑥ Stand in the armor of God. Paul said, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." You can find a description of this in Ephesians 6.11-18:

- We have the truth of God's Word, the righteousness of Christ and the gospel of peace (wholeness) at work on our behalf.
- We have the helmet of salvation (salvation, healing, deliverance, prosperity and preservation) to guide and direct our thoughts.
- We have the shield of faith to quench his fiery darts. Make no mistake, discouragement is most certainly one of the devil's fiery darts.
- We have the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This is the offensive weapon that silences the voice of discouragement and all the lies of the devil.
- We have all kinds of prayer in the Holy Spirit by which we can persevere and supply every need of the saints. Learn to pray as the Spirit of God leads.

DISCOURAGEMENT WILL TELL YOU THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING GOING FOR YOU and everything going against you. Encouragement tells you that you have everything going for you and it doesn't matter what you have going against you. God is on your side, with the provision for every need and the answer for every problem you may have. That is why Jesus came, and why, like David, you too can encourage yourself in the LORD your God.

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