

# Importance of Right Spiritual Climate

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of maintaining a right spiritual climate in order to overcome discouragement and live an effective Christian life.*

**Duration:** 39:42

**Scripture:** Psalm 46:10, Psalm 56:8, Psalm 126:5-6, Jeremiah 9:1, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, 2 Timothy 4:16-17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Climate"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of being captive to various things in life. He shares a personal story about feeling captive to the responsibility of raising his children and the fear of something happening to him and leaving them without care. The speaker emphasizes that even in captivity, there can be moments of divine revelation and connection with God, using the example of the prophet Ezekiel. He encourages the audience to remember that they belong to a minority group and may face discouragement, but to keep their faith strong and continue living for God. The speaker also touches on the idea of having high ideals and the potential for discouragement when those ideals are not met. He concludes by mentioning the importance of contentment and accepting one's role in life, using the analogy of a cow being content with being a cow.

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## Transcript

Now I want to read from two passages, two parts of the scriptures, one from Joshua 1 9. The Lord says, Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. For the Lord thy God is with thee, with us wherever thou goest.

Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, and be of a good courage. Then Deuteronomy 1 21 Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee. Go up and possess it.

As the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee, Fear not, neither be discouraged. Now if I wanted to, I could have called, had wanted to, I could have called this morning's talk The Causes and the Cure of Discouragement. And I begin by telling you that I am speaking today about the Christian's worst enemy, or at least one of the very worst enemies the Christian can have.

It is an enemy and a bad enemy, not because it is the greatest really, but because it's the greatest nuisance. Its value to the devil is very great, because it is very seldom recognized as being an enemy, and it works when other temptations can't work and wouldn't work. A person who would scornfully dismiss a

temptation to physical sin may nevertheless go along with this enemy.

So I want to talk about discouragement as a mood and the cure of it. Now for discouragement it is a ruling emotion, and it becomes a very painful thing, he feels it. It is an emotion which can be, and often is, very distressing.

But it goes on past being an emotion, it becomes a disposition, and it goes past that and becomes an outlook and an attitude. There are people who are permanently discouraged, I have met them. They have a discouraged look on their face, the tone of their voice is discouraged, their voice is flat and dead, I've met a few like that, not many, thank God, but a few.

They're even too discouraged to commit suicide. They're just too discouraged to do anything about it. They're going to live it out somehow or other, if you can call what they're doing living.

Now that we find in a great many places. But it ought not to be in the church, and I want to point out the causes of it, and I want to point out the cure. For this is a mental climate or a spiritual climate, this combination of outlook and disposition and emotion, this becomes a climate, and a discouraged climate, nothing much can grow in it.

If you go to some parts of the world, you will find bananas and oranges and avocados and bougainvillea, and friends here just came back from Florida, and it's a nice sun tan, and no doubt they saw all those things down there. Well now you don't see them up in Mococa, why? Because the climate up there isn't favorable. It's favorable to some things that don't grow in Florida.

But Florida's favorable to things that don't grow up at Mococa Lake. So there are certain things that just won't grow in a discouraged heart, and not only that, the heart itself won't grow. The mood, the climate, the prevailing feeling, the attitude, the outlook, the expectation or lack of it, all combine to make the climate.

And where there is this discouraged or defeated sort of climate, some plants just can't grow, joy can't grow. The Lord's people ought to be, as I've said many times, a joyful people, but joy won't grow in the cold, gloomy, damp climate of discouragement. Neither will power grow there.

You never saw a discouraged man that had any power, any sort, moral or spiritual. And there can be no effective activity. There are some churches that accept discouragement as the prevailing mood.

They come to church discouraged, they sing their hymns discouragely, they give a discouraged five dollar bill, they listen to a discouraged sermon, and they go home discouraged. And of course nothing grows, there is nothing there, there can't be anything there. Their activity is, what there is of activity has got to be ineffective, and their power, what power they have can't be spiritual power.

And then this same mood that favors or that does not favor the such fruit as joy and power and effective activity, it favors certain noxious plants. Certain plants that ought not to be, but they are, such as fear, the discouraged person is afraid. That's what the word means.

Courage means not afraid, and this courage dehydrates it and makes it the opposite so that it's not, there's no courage there. And so fear takes the place, then there's self-pity. You just shout at the average discouraged man, he'll break down.

And cry not because of fear, his worry of the world, but because he's pitying himself. And the self-engrossed man, the discouraged person is utterly wrapped up in himself, and you know that the man who's wrapped up in himself is satisfied with a pretty small package. And this discouraged, self-engrossed, self-pitying attitude toward life, it isn't good, and the children of God shouldn't have it at all.

They should be utterly unlike that. Now, discouragement is more prevalent than you know. The Sunday school superintendent, if his attendance is down, he feels blue about it.

That's discouragement. The pastor, if the crowd falls off a little some Sunday, he's discouraged about it. And their teacher in Sunday school, if his class doesn't come up, he feels discouraged about it.

And we're discouraged. We look at the people over carefully and wonder if there are as many as there were last week, and we feel discouraged if there are not. Now, this discouragement, this sense of deceitism and self-pity and this blue feeling, doesn't come to old people only, nor to young people only.

It comes to both young and old and middle-aged. It comes to the sober, it comes to the radiant, it comes to the lofty, it comes to the practical, it comes to the poetic, it comes to the pedestrian type of mind. It is universal.

It's like the common cold. Everybody's likely to get it, but I hope nobody needs to get it. And it would astonish a lot of you if we were to be... We had some sort of fluoroscope affair, such as the doctors have, and we were all compelled to walk in front of it and have everybody else look on.

It would be really an alarming thing to see how many of the Lord's people are discouraged in times like these. If that fluoroscope could show the little lumps we call discouragement in the human spirit, there's a lot of them there. Now, there are causes for discouragement.

The curse doesn't come causeless and the blessing doesn't come causeless. The only thing I know that has no cause is the change of women's fashions. I can't imagine what that's about.

I have never seen any reason for that. But apart from that, everything has a cause. And if you can trace the cause, you might be able to find the cure.

Well, one cause, and I want to go to the Bible for my example, so you will know that I'm not just combing this out of my own head. But there's a sense of loneliness. There was a man one time by the name of Elijah.

And Elijah lacked the support of like-minded souls. If you have the support of others, you're not so likely to become discouraged. But Elijah didn't have any support at all.

I may be talking to some people, you have not one grain or trace of help back home. You haven't anybody around you at all. Now, most of you, I would say, come from Christian homes.

For somebody's sympathetic with your spiritual intentions, but a lot of people come from homes where there's only one Christian. The Lord told us about that. And so the temptation is to become discouraged about this.

And the truer the soul, the truer and the more loyal to God, the more likely the soul is to become discouraged, because the contrast is so great, because the way they want to see, between what they want to see and what is, and the higher the ideal that we set, the poorer it'll be, and the more likely we will be to

become discouraged. The ballplayer that starts out of the season and says, if I can hit 200, I'll be all right. That is, if I can get one, every ten times I come to bat, if I can get two hits, I'll be satisfied.

He's not likely to be discouraged, because almost anybody could get two hits out of ten. But if he's got his mind set on being a 400 hitter, he's not likely to make it. There have been very few, none in the last several ten or twelve years.

And of course, there'll be a sense of discouragement. The ideal is high, and when we fail, then we plunge into despondency, because our ideal has been high. Why, the man without ideals isn't discouraged.

Browning talked about a finished and finite clod, uncoupled by a spark. And you never heard of the discouraged cow. You've heard of the contented cow.

The cow that is contented with being a cow, and that's why she's a cow, and that's why she'll stay a cow, because she's contented to be a cow. I'd just like to write a little book or a little short story sometime, an imaginative piece about the cow that's determined to be an angel. She wouldn't make it, but she sure would be an interesting cow.

And you have high ideals, and you don't make it, you're discouraged. Well, now what's the answer to that? Well, the answer is based upon, of course, an error. It is this sense of loneliness, this feeling that there's nobody else that's longing after God, nobody else like you.

The error lies in this, that there are thousands of others like you. When Elijah went into that tailspin and said, Lord, take me away, take me away, and you know I've got, I warn people, be careful about getting, pouting and going to God and asking to die. Elijah asked to die.

He didn't die, but he went out of this world. God took him home, He took him out of here. And there are one or two other cases in the scriptures where when a man asks to die, the Lord let him.

So you be careful about that. You know, you might say to your husband, I'd rather be dead, but he'll do anything about it, only buy you some candy. But if you seriously talk like that to God, He may just take you at your word.

And there'll be some preacher standing over you, telling about your virtues, forgetting that the Lord took you home because you were too discouraged to live. Well, remember that there are a lot of people in the world that are just as bad off as you are. Just as bad off as you.

I sometimes visit places, hospitals and places, and see people with tubes down their noses and their leg in traction, and I'm not exactly what you'd call athletic, but at least I can get around and I don't have a tube in my nose, and I walk awkwardly, but that's natural to me. It isn't because of anything wrong with my leg. So you're better off than you think.

I'd advise some of you to go. If you're worried about your IQ, go to a home for retarded children or for feeble-minded, and boy, you'll feel like a million when you come out of there. You'll say, well, there's other people a lot worse than I am sure there are.

And your spiritual state and your spiritual condition, you're lots better off, and you ought to be thankful to God every hour for all the friends that you have and all the people there are in all the world that are no worse off than you. Loneliness is pretty much a desire to be comforted. Nobody around to rub your head

and comfort you until you feel bad.

Let's get over that. Let's remember Paul said, everybody forsook me, and then he said, just a minute, he said to Manuensis. Manuensis started away, and he said, come back here, he said, and he said, nevertheless, the Lord stood with me.

He wrote that on the end. Everybody left me, said Paul, and said, here, put this on. Nevertheless, the Lord stood with me.

Always so. The Lord doesn't desert his people. Then there's a second cause of discouragement, and that is the wickedness of the people, and that was Jeremiah.

Jeremiah cried and said he wished his head were the fountain of tears. He just wished that the top would come off and salty tears would begin to flow and he could just sit there like a fountain and weep all the time. He got tired of talking to no purpose.

He preached and nobody listened. He exhorted and nobody obeyed. He tried to help, but nobody wanted to be helped.

And the man of God, being a good man on earth, trying to live in a bad world, he got very much discouraged, and he wanted to go away and dwell in the howling wilderness and be away from people. He wanted to get out among the beasts. He said they're better off than the people.

Well, now, what's the answer to this? Well, I'll tell you this about Jeremiah. If Jeremiah had known then what he knows now, he'd have gone around with a smile on his face right in the midst of all that iniquity, because though Jeremiah, how long ago did Jeremiah live? Let's see here if I can find it. He lived away back there 600 years before Christ.

That's 2600 years ago nearly. And for 2600 years, Jeremiah's book has been blessing mankind. Now, if Jeremiah had known that, he never would have been discouraged.

He gave his testimony and it seemed to fall on stony ground. But it didn't. It fell upon fruitful soil because that fruitful soil has brought forth fruit.

That 2600 years has blessed mankind, I repeat. So you keep your testimony bright and keep living for God and don't get discouraged because of the wickedness of the people. Aren't you just a little bit blue or tend to be a little bit blue because Toronto the good is rapidly becoming Toronto the bad? They blame it on American gangsters.

I don't know. I didn't bring any of them with me. But none of them followed me either.

But whoever's doing it, they didn't pass those laws permitting them to have Sunday movies now. They didn't do that. People just getting bad.

That's all the world is getting bad. In nice places that have reputation. And Canada's had a reputation for being a moral country all over the world ever since she's been a country.

But she's learning to do evil things too. It's a disease and it's spreading all over the world. It's spread all over the world and there's no place where wickedness is not thriving.

If you're in the midst of wickedness, don't be discouraged about it. Our Lord walked among evil men and they were wicked people. Jesus lived and gave himself and did his work and said, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Paul said, I have finished my course. It's possible to live and do your work in the most unlikely condition. Jeremiah's testimony went on and on and still going on and we're still taking consolation from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah could have known 2600 years ago but 2600 years later in a land he'd never heard of among a people totally different from him a man would stand and use Jeremiah as an example of courage and of fruit in the midst of discouragement or at least discouraging conditions. He just smiled and said, Forgive me Lord, I don't want my head to become a fountain of tears. I want to rejoice and praise thee.

So remember, you can continue to praise God because you give your testimony and live your life and the Lord will see that not one of your tears will be anything less than immortal and not one of your prayers will ever die. For God keeps your prayers in his bottle up yonder. I used to think that when people died their prayers died with them but I think so no more.

The prayers of a man are kept up yonder, not on ice but they're kept before the throne of God. I will keep all my tears in thy bottle. Then the third reason that I want to give you for discouragement in this bad mental climate is captivity.

A man named Ezekiel, he was a priest, son of Jehuziah, the tribe of Levi. And he was among the captives and he was by the River Tiber and he was sitting there waiting for complete despondency. Now he was captive and he was discouraged because he was a captive.

His nation had dissolved around him. His flag had been pulled down and he was now at the mercy of a great and brutal nation whose language he couldn't speak. There are a lot of people that are captive.

You may smile at this but it's very real and there are times when it becomes so real until we don't smile. There's that housewife. She gets married so bad when she's a young girl.

She thinks, you know, there's nothing but romance and pretty clothes and nice houses and a big car. But she finds that they're children and they're lovely little fellows but they can be terribly hard on your nerves. And the worst part about these you can't get away from.

They're there and you brought them. And the Lord may have sent them but you were there and you brought them. And there they are.

And your husband's off at work and they're in your hands. And so you must be everything to them. And though they're angels they have a strange way of acting as if they'd come from another direction.

And you feel captivated. I mean in the wrong sense. You're bound.

It's all right for a day or two. Maybe for a week if you put up with it and tell jokes about it and kid and say, oh, they were terrible. But when there's no end to it, a week follows a week and a week follows a week.

Another week follows another week and that runs into a month and a month runs into years. And you're still captive. Captive to the stove and the vacuum cleaner and your children and blowing noses and combing hair that doesn't stay combed and washing faces that won't stay clean.

Pulling them down off of places where they've been climbing. After a while you feel, oh, Lord, why did I get married? I'm captive. I'm a slave.

I'm bound. Now you won't say it. If you're a Christian you won't say it, but it gets in your system.

Doesn't it now? Haven't I described some of you good women? You've never told your husband this and the great big lug doesn't know it. He doesn't know how you feel to this day. He thinks that everything is just wonderful.

He comes home, you have on a clean apron and supper's ready. Oh, boy, he thinks what a wonderful wife, but you've been home discouraged that day. Well, then there are workmen that are discouraged.

Go to work to the whistle and quick at the whistle and you're pretty much a little straw boss that isn't worth that. Pushing you around, telling you what to do. A fella just out of high school, you know, the brother-in-law or the son-in-law or the big boss sitting at a desk looking you over as though you belonged to the proletariat and he belonged up there.

Well, it's not so nice, but you got it to do. You say to yourself, I'm going to quit. I won't take that from this fella.

And then you remember your age. And you say, if I quit now, I can't get another job. If I quit now, I'm finished.

You know, they give you vitamins to make you live to be 90 and then when you're 45 they say, I won't hire you because you're too old. But a lot of people are discouraged because they're captive to their work. Then there's the family man.

Coming along one right after the other just as if they didn't want to break the rhythm. And one little boy would bounce in and then we'd barely get him straightened around. Another little boy would bounce in.

So six of them would bounce in. And I remember one time lying in bed with deep fear. What if something would happen to me? I never told anybody about how I suffered worrying about those boys.

It's a beautiful captivity but it's captivity nevertheless. So we get captive to things and there are shut-ins and there are lame people and we're captive. Ezekiel was a captive.

But do you know what happened to Ezekiel when he was captive there? Suddenly heavens were opened and he saw visions of God. He pressed me onto Ezekiel and the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him. It wasn't when Ezekiel was all walking in the midst of the captives.

Always remember that as long as you live your candidate won't likely get elected. Always remember that the law you'd like to see passed you'll get defeated. Always remember that the thing you'd like to see done likely won't be done because the country isn't in the hands of sin.

It's in the hands of Adam's fallen race. All countries are. And you as a Christian belong to another world all together.

And your ideal is to bring in the kingdom of God down to men. But it doesn't come down like that now. Wait on the coming of Jesus Christ the Lord.

When he comes whose right it is to reign then the will of the Lord will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So you're going to have to remember that. Look up to see whether the heavens won't be opened in the midst of your captivity.

Then it says our brethren discouraged our hearts. That was in Israel in the days of Ezra. Our brethren discouraged our hearts.

A bunch of them got together. I don't know whether it was a board or just a bunch that were unintentionally just without purpose that met together. And each one looked so gloomy that each one looked at the other one and felt that if anybody is as gloomy as that in the world things must be in bad shape.

So they were gloomily looked at each other and slowly took on the other's mood and they were gloomy outfits. Timid, pessimistic brethren always infect the crowd. When a pastor with some zeal and a board with some forward look wants to go somewhere usually there are a few old deacons God bless them who have seen things as they were so long they don't think they can be otherwise than what they have been.

And the concept of a change just won't enter their poor old heads. And so they dragged their blessed feet till the toes are worn out of their shoes dragging their feet. I literally now I've been preaching a long time and I've literally gone ahead dragging the feet of people.

More people have dragged their feet. Anything you want to do we want to build a new church one time where I was and we foolishly pronged the congregation that we wouldn't take any steps without consulting them. So when we get a new set of blueprints or something we'd call a congregational meeting.

And the result was you know there'd be always some pessimistic brother who couldn't see us. Somebody said if you build a new church your missionary offering will fall off. Build a new church this will happen sooner that will happen.

So I went before the people one time and I said will you please release us of our vow. For where we're going now we're getting nowhere fast. And I'd like a motion to put in the hands of the board and the building committee all authority to commit you.

All in favor say aye. Everybody said aye. You know it's too late to say anything else.

And they hadn't thought it through but they just said aye and we were free. We had our church in very short order. We'd still been trying to build as if it hadn't been.

We got free. We got the old boys with their toe dragging got them off our neck. Excuse my confused imagery.

But that's what we got. Now the timid gloomy brethren often cause the true Christian to be blue. I don't think we ought to be always smiling.

Really don't. When a fellow smiles too consistently I wonder about his mental condition. But there ought to be a there ought to be what what a great English electricographer and writer Samuel Johnson called found in John Wesley the most perfect example of high moral happiness that he'd ever seen anywhere.

High moral happiness. And there ought to be in the people of God high moral happiness. Doesn't keep them giggling.

They don't necessarily have to be the kind that are always laughing. But they're at least cheerful and hopeful and optimistic and out optimistic out looks wonderful. You don't know what you do for a man.

You don't know what you'll do for that little man behind me. If you call him sometime and say to him instead of saying that you felt we shouldn't have sung number nine that was a poor choice or the usher was just as courteous to me and turned his back on him or something, if you'd say oh brother Gray, you don't know what yesterday's service did for me. I would just lift it up, fill around a little bit of a hopefulness and see what it'll do for preachers.

Absolutely. I get letters lately telling me that they don't say it like that but the general import of it is that I never should have been born and if I had, if it had to be, then I should have died young. But I get letters also just saying that you can help a man by being careful.

Then since the only last one I'm going to mention, the cause of spiritual discouragement is reading about the exile, I think that would be very encouraging. Well, if you want to read a biography, simply as literature, I suppose it's encouraging, but if you're a serious-minded Christian, it's likely to make you feel prejudiced. Because you see, everything that's good about them was put into the biography and everything that wasn't so good was put into the biography.

So you'll see, usually takes the warts off, and if it's cast in the eye, straightens out a stoop, he straightens a man. And everything that was wrong with his idol, he straightens out before he prints his book. And the result is, the average biography is just not so.

There may be things in it that are true, but the general, the good man, was how good he was. The Bible isn't that kind of a book. Wherever the Bible gives us biography, it gives us both sides.

It says, David was a good man and after God's heart. But David walked on the roof one day and saw that he got it. It shows both sides, and I can read the life of David and not be discouraged.

It tells us that Jacob wrestled with the Lord all night, but it also tells us that Jacob was a crooked man. He didn't cheat, but he came pretty close. He could be a saint, but also he had, he was a man of light.

I say, oh God help me, I must have had the blood of Adam. That man, that man, wonderful. If I preach four or five times a week and he preaches four or five times a week, then I'm also along with that reading the letters of Samuel Rutherford.

When I read Samuel Rutherford, radiant, wonderful, I agree that I'm not selfish. These great men disperse their shadow. I can at least stand or kneel.

I can't preach to tens of thousands, I can preach to some of the best. They had their times too when they weren't so good. And they had their times when they weren't so optimistic.

They might have got a little blue too, but the point is don't give away to it. And besides that, suppose these men were as great as they are supposed to have been. They're dead.

And a living dog's better than a dead lion. Come up to me, you know, to compare me to Dr. Simpson. It's embarrassing because I don't compare that great Canadian preacher with the top of the world in his day, you know, great preacher.

But Dr. Simpson is dead. And he can no longer preach. That silver voice is silent and my gravelly voice is still able to be heard.

I'll go on giving my witness till the Lord comes. Then, anything that depends on a dead man's got to fail. Anything.

The Lord can't say, Dr. Simpson, I want you to go to Toronto and preach to the people to have a new role. He couldn't say it to a man who is sleeping in the sleep of the just. But he can't to a man who is sleeping in the sleep of can't say it to a sleep of the just.

So, I say, I would encourage you this morning to get your chin up, elevate it a little bit. Be grateful and thankful to God for pleading for you by name. I used to hear them sing sometimes, everything's all right, everything's all right in my father's house.

We're living in a miserable world. Mark bad, mostly bad, in and out and up and down, changeable as the weather, calls to be good men and women in a bad world, to witness to God among the men who don't want to hear about him, not to stay here and give that witness to God in a bad world. I don't want to stay here and give bad to God.

don't want to stay here and give that witness to God in a bad world. I want to that witness to God in a bad world. I don't want to in a bad world.

I stay here and give to God in a bad world. I stay here and give that witness to God in a bad world. I don't want to that witness to God in a bad world.

I and give that witness to God in a bad world. I don't want to stay here bad world. don't want to stay that witness to God in a bad world.

I want to The people would turn their nose if you were to recommend Smith and say, where's that sweet fragrance?

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