

It's Not Unusual to Be Discouraged

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan's sermon emphasizes the universal nature of discouragement and encourages believers to be honest with God and seek His comfort and support during tough times.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Trust in God", "Discouragement"

Description

K.P. Yohannan addresses the universal experience of discouragement, emphasizing that it can affect anyone, regardless of their spiritual stature or past victories. He illustrates how even great biblical figures like Jonah and Elijah faced deep discouragement, reminding us that it is a tool often wielded by Satan to undermine our faith. Yohannan encourages believers to be honest about their struggles and to bring their feelings of discouragement to God, as seen in the Psalms and the example of Jesus in Gethsemane. He reassures that God is always near to those who are brokenhearted and invites us to cast our anxieties on Him for comfort and support. Ultimately, the sermon serves as a reminder that we are not alone in our struggles and that God is ready to lift us up in our times of need.

Transcript

At this moment, how are you doing? Perhaps you are on the mountaintop . . . or maybe you're camping out in the valley? Or maybe someone you know is going through a tough time. I think it is safe to say that discouragement comes to the best of us. One of the most difficult things in life is to stay encouraged. The stuff that keeps us going continually leaks out. It seems we are so fragile, prone to live by our feelings and emotions, so easily discouraged. Think about it. It really doesn't take much at all to get discouraged.

It can be one look or one word, someone's silence, a telephone that doesn't ring or something we expected that didn't happen. The smallest thing can trigger discouragement. Even our own imaginations, which may have no concrete basis, can trigger its downward spiral. Where does it come from? Sometimes it feels like ice cold wind that makes us shiver deep within, and like dominoes, all hope tumbles down and we land in the pit of despair, stripped of all joy and hope and feeling so helpless.

There may be a thousand reasons for discouragement, but one thing is for sure: There is someone behind this sinister force. Our enemy: Satan. His Most Subtle Tool It was advertised that the devil was going to put his tools up for sale. On the date of the sale the tools were placed for public inspection, each being marked with its sale price. There were a treacherous lot of implements. Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Doubt, Lying, Pride, and so on. Laid apart from the rest of the pile was a harmless-looking tool, well-worn and

priced very high.

"The name of the tool?" asked one of the purchasers. "Oh," said the adversary, "that's Discouragement." "Why have you priced it so high?" "Because it's more useful to me than the others. I can pry open and get inside a person's heart with that one, when I cannot get near him with other tools. Now once I get inside, I can make him do what I choose. It's a badly worn tool, because I use it on almost everyone since few people know it belongs to me." The devil's price for Discouragement was so high, he never sold it.

It's still his major tool, and he still uses it on God's people today.¹ I know far too well just how often the adversary uses this tool. For the past 19 years, I have been doing a daily radio broadcast in India in my native language of Malayalam, a language spoken by 38 million people. In a given year, anywhere from 80,000 to 100,000 letters are received from those who listen to the broadcast. Nearly 75 percent of these letters consist of people sharing the difficulties they are facing, their agony, disillusionment and hopelessness.

They write in requesting prayer for these things. Yet what is alarming is that on a daily basis, an average of 25 letters come with the news of someone contemplating suicide, yet the person will wait until hearing back from me before going through with it. Of course, a response is quickly sent and our staff prays. By the grace of God, only one person who had written in has actually committed suicide; all the others responded to the help given them in Christ's name. This epidemic of the soul is not just one found in India, but all over our world.

Discouragement knows no boundaries, whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate. We as human beings, no matter what caste, creed, culture or nation we come from, all face struggles in life. I remember when I first began to realize this. It was in Singapore in 1971, when I attended an international Christian leaders meeting. The guest speaker shared how he recently suffered from a mental breakdown and ended up in the hospital for treatment. When I heard that, I was shocked! I couldn't fathom it.

I could not understand how a preacher, an ordained minister serving God, could have had a mental breakdown. It didn't fit into my theology at the time. But as I grew in the Lord, I came to realize that this was not an uncommon thing. Discouragement and depression happen to a lot of godly people. No matter how high a mountaintop experience we may have had, no matter how many revelations we may have received, no matter how many times the Lord has stepped in to rescue us before, we remain weak and fragile human beings.

No amount of gifting by the Holy Spirit or being baptized in the Holy Spirit, no amount of casting out demons or performing miracles, no amount of Bible knowledge or preaching will keep us from discouragement. It comes to the best of us. Consider Jonah. Regarded as a prophet of God, he was sure to have heard God share some remarkable things with him. He experienced the Lord's grace and salvation from the belly of the fish. He saw how He lavished mercy rather than wrath upon the people of Nineveh.

He saw God do incredible things in his day. Yet even after all of this, he became so discouraged that he prayed to die (see Jonah 4:3). Or think about Elijah. This man of God experienced a miraculous victory on Mount Carmel, when fire fell from heaven and consumed a water-soaked sacrifice. He saw how the Lord glorified His name and destroyed all the prophets of Baal. When Elijah prayed, great things happened--a three-and-a-half-year drought ended in heavy rain. But still, he experienced discouragement.

First Kings 19:4 tells us that right after these incredible events, he "went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!' " Don't Pretend There are many examples throughout the Bible of great men and women of God who experienced discouragement. The interesting thing is that they never tried to hide it. They told God about it.

They came to the Lord with their feelings and discouragement. So often we are tempted to cover up our discouragement because we don't want others to think we are weak. We don't want people to think of us as unspiritual. Yet when we read through the Psalms, we hear the desperate cries of many a discouraged man. Psalm 102:1-5 says, Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily.

For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin. The psalmist is discouraged. It is apparent that he is not trying to deny it or hide it from anyone. And, as always, this honest approach to God brings refreshment and hope. This psalm ends with the writer crying out, "But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.

The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You" (Psalm 102:27-28). Most of all, Jesus did not hide His discouragement. In the Garden of Gethsemane we see Jesus, the One who was there at the spectacular creation of the universe, falling down on the ground in despair. In His moment of greatest need, He did not put on a show for His disciples but was honest and human before them. He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed (Mark 14:33-35, NIV, emphasis added). Jesus is our perfect example in all things, even in how to handle discouragement. Although terribly burdened down by the events of the cross that soon faced Him, He was honest before His fellow man and before His Father. Let us follow Him in this, and receive the invitation in all things to "humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7, NIV). He has given us His promise that when we cry to Him, He will hear us. "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:17-19). If you are one who is discouraged today, please, cry out to Him. His ear is tuned in to your cries, and He waits to be your help and comfort. 1 Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1998), p. 164

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