

Leading through discouragement

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Nobody sails through life without a dose of discouragement. And how we handle discouragement will dictate, not only our emotional and mental health, but our ability to bring a vision into reality. So how do we get past discouragement to the prize on the other side?

A Sunrise of Hope

When Jesus announced his impending death, while they didn't fully grasp what he meant, discouragement stung the disciples. The Lord saw the lifeless look in their eyes and made a promise that offered a sunrise of hope. He said his death wasn't a final farewell. Like a trailblazer, he was going ahead of them to the Father's house to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-2). Things would get better tomorrow.

The Mice

Several years ago I read about an experiment in which researchers placed a dozen laboratory mice in a vat of water. As the mice swam in small circles the researchers would periodically lift out of the water several they had identified with a mark on their head. These mice would then be placed back in the water.

As the researchers expected, those mice that were lifted out of the water swam much longer than the rest. The question this reality surfaced was: Why? The researchers didn't think it was the brief swimming break since it only lasted a second or two. Nor were the mice stronger since they had been randomly selected.

In a Word: Hope

In a word, the researchers said the mice swam longer because they had HOPE. The mice hoped if they could swim a little longer, they would be saved.

At times we may feel like our efforts are as useless as a mouse swimming in a vat of water. What we need at such times is hope. It's a powerful force that will enable us to keep swimming when our muscles ache and plead for relief. That's why Jesus said, "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3).

While it's crucial to study an obstacle so you can devise a way to get past it, don't obsess over the problem. Instead, look to the positive reality beyond the obstacle. Such a focus will dispel discouragement and buoy your spirit and those you lead.