

Why Are You Discouraged?

Written by Bill Perkins

When you're discouraged, find out why.

During a time of despair, the author of Psalm 42:4-5, wrote:

*“Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.”*

Dangerous Lies

Like the psalmist we need to ask ourselves: “Why am I discouraged. Dark emotions often follow on the heels of a lie about God. A lie that says:

God doesn't care

God has abandoned me

God won't meet my needs.

God is mad at me.

God doesn't appreciate all I've done for him.

Such lies often seem true when you're overcome by hardship.

Hope in God

Consider the author of Psalm 42. When he penned the song, enemies held him captive. Vicious men mocked him and derided his God (read the psalm and you'll see what I mean). Instead of hoping in his ability to escape or his friend's ability to rescue him, the psalmist told himself to “hope” in God.

The Hebrew word for “hope” means to “wait for,” “believe in,” or “trust in.” *The verb doesn't speak of an unrealistic faith that focuses on the silver lining and ignores the cloud.* It refers to trusting in the personal and present God who delivers his children.

That doesn't mean God will deliver us in the way we want. In fact, God may deliver us from our suffering by taking us home. Or he may deliver us from despair by infusing us with hope.

Choose to Believe the Truth about God

Many people think that faith in God guarantees happiness. It doesn't. But we must *choose to believe* the truth about God, regardless of how we feel. Mature believers, like the psalmist, *choose to trust in the faithfulness of God*, no matter how they feel. That's something we must strive for. But developing an enduring faith requires knowing faith in God doesn't guarantee pleasant feelings.

They may follow our faith, *but not always*. And for people who struggle with chronic depression brought on by physiological problems, even with medical treatment, happiness may be an infrequent visitor. The same is true of those who have suffered a severe loss, like the death of a loved one.

Follow the Example of Jesus

Having stated that painful truth, I find it comforting to remember that even Jesus, who trusted completely in the Father, experienced negative emotions. Matthew recorded that when Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane he became "sorrowful and troubled" (Mt. 26:37). Jesus told Peter, James and John, who were with him in the garden, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mt. 26:38).

Realizing this about Jesus proves that negative emotions aren't the yardstick of spiritual maturity. The point I'm making is that painful emotions are a part of life and a healthy connection with God may not remove them. But it will enable us to have a hope and faith that will empower us to trust in God in the face of hardship and negative feelings.

The next time you're down ask yourself how you got there. If you're believing a lie, reject it and replace it with truth - truth about the faithfulness and love of God. Remind yourself that God will never abandon you. One way or another he'll save you. Such positive words, when repeated, will infuse your spirit with hope and enable you to keep a reign on your emotions until they change.