

Dealing with Discouragement, Disappointment and Weariness in Ministry

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Discouragement in Ministry

If you have been in ministry very long, I am sure you will have faced times of discouragement. That's not something we like to admit but I believe it is something we need to deal with.

We would like to come across 'strong' like there have never been times of discouragement and disappointment in ministry. It's good to be strong, I believe in that, but at the same time, we need to be real and honest!

Pastors and ministers may be 'men of God', but we are also human!

Being a minister does not mean you don't have feelings you have to face and deal with. We have emotions and feelings too. When things don't quite go like we expected, we also can face disappointment and discouragement.

The Word 'Discourage' can be defined as, 'to lose courage, confidence and energy.

Discouragement can cause a loss of motivation.

Connected to discouragement is disappointment. Enough disappointment can result in discouragement.

Disappointment is 'the feeling of being let down' - a feeling of sadness or frustration because something was not as good or satisfactory as expected, or because something hoped for did not happen

What causes Discouragement in Ministry?

Probably one of the biggest opportunities to get discouraged comes when things in our churches or ministries don't grow as quickly as we thought they would.

We step out with such passion, with a vision to reach our city, thinking that 'overnight' we are going to have a huge revival. As time goes by, we begin to realise that it is not quite happening as we thought it would. We get disappointed and eventually discouragement sets in.

Another source of discouragement comes when we put our confidence in people and they let us down.

I am sure that we have all faced that one. Someone comes to our church who makes great promises of how they will help us and yet they never seem to come through for us! We get our hopes raised, and then get disappointed, which becomes discouragement when things don't work out like we had hoped!

Sometimes we get our hopes up, when some visitors come to our church, we get excited, thinking that 'things are happening now', then a few weeks later, the visitors don't come anymore, and half our regular people don't show up, leaving a smaller crowd than usual!

These are real issues that we face in the ministry, so we need to talk about them. We cannot just leave this discouragement unchecked, as it can become a tool the enemy uses to pull us off track, and even cause us to quit.

Disappointment and discouragement can cause you to get more and more focused on the things that are discouraging you. You begin to get 'zeroed' in on those things and caught up in them and they pull you down even more.

It is important that we see the discouragement for what it is and how it can hinder us, or even stop us. It is also important that we learn how to stop it setting in and how to overcome it.

It can help us to know that we are not alone in the challenges we face, others have faced them before and have overcome!

The key is knowing how to overcome this discouragement, rather than letting it hinder or stop you.

What does the Bible say have to say about these issues?

Hebrews 12:3

:3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

This verse issues the warning about, 'becoming weary and discouraged in your souls...'

The Amplified Bible translates this as, '...losing heart / fainting...'

The Phillips Translation as, '...lest you lose your purpose and your courage...'

Rotherham's puts it, '...lest you be wearied in your souls becoming exhausted...'

This issue of 'weariness' is connected here to discouragement.

Galatians 6:9

:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Here in Galatians we see a warning NOT to grow weary. As you continue on your path, 'doing good', this weariness can set in.

Weariness can be defined as:

- Having run out of strength, patience, or endurance*
- Lack of strength, inner drive and motivation*
- Unable to exert yourself anymore*
- No more endurance*
- Feeling like, 'I've given out and have no more to give'*
- Lack of strength to keep moving forward*

A weary person has lost the will to fight or stand (or even live!)

Other translations say the following for Galatians 6:9

Message Bible, '...do not allow yourself to become fatigued...'

Amplified speaks of '...losing your courage...'

Other translations say, '...growing tired...'

2 Thessalonians 3:13

:13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

Each of these verses warns us against getting weary.

This feeling of exhaustion on the inside that arises when we feel like we just don't have the strength or motivation to keep going is one we must deal with and learn to overcome.

One of the Old Testament words translated as **'weary' means 'to gasp' (out of exhaustion)**. It gives the idea of a person who is so tired they just let out a gasp of air.

This kind of feeling is not just because you are physically tired, it is the result of **emotional and spiritual tiredness** which has been allowed to set in. Getting physical rest alone won't deal with it.

Disappointments in ministry and the resulting discouragement weight on you, and over time cause you to get weary and tired on the inside.

You don't suddenly go from being strong and courageous in God to being weary. It is not an overnight thing, it's a process of slipping backwards.

The enemy 'sifts you' through pressure here and then there, one disappointment, then another, each time getting you out the Word, further from God and weaker spiritually.

He wears you down over time, with the goal of getting you off track, away from God and eventually to get you to give up

Do you get the picture?

That is why there is strong Bible warning against weariness

Sound familiar?

We all face times like this. The thing is – I believe that this discouragement, which sets in, can be a great hindrance to your growth and effectiveness in ministry. It can hinder your preaching and your flowing with the Holy Spirit.

One definition of discouragement is to lose energy. When you get discouraged, you don't feel like you have the energy to put into things anymore. I believe this can affect our motivation.

Some things that cause weariness and discouragement in ministry

1) getting so caught up in the natural side of ministry that you spend less time with the Lord

- your *PERSONAL* relationship with God is vital, yet many lose this when they get busy with ministry (example: Mary and Martha in the Gospels)

2) losing your first love

- your passion for your calling comes out of your passion for the Lord. When you lose your passion 'for Him', your passion for your calling will lessen / wane

3) Looking at what is going on around you in the natural rather than keeping your eyes on Him

4) Self consciousness

- feeling like a failure, like you are not good enough or 'the right person for the job' etc. We need to become God conscious - look to His power, grace and ability, not just our own. We are not to do this in our own strength

5) Comparing yourself with others

- looking to other people's success, and comparing yourself, feeling like you are not 'doing as good' (those who compare = not wise)

You are running your race, not someone else's. Trying to keep up with others in ministry is a major source of getting weary, because you end up trying to do it all in the flesh, rather than in God's strength

The good news is there is help for this.

Hebrews 12:1-3

:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

:3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

There is a Bible solution to overcoming weariness:

Isaiah 40:28-31

:29 - He gives strength when there is none!

:30 - those strong naturally have their limits!

BUT :31 - there is a supernatural source of strength which supersedes the natural and keeps going even when the natural strength runs out

There is NO substitute for time with God; NOTHING is so important that it can replace that

The very success of everything you do is dependent upon and comes from that time with God

The ability to keep going without getting weary comes from waiting upon the Lord. God needs to be your daily lifeline and supply

Luke 10:38-42; Psalm 27:1-8

What are you focusing on?

I believe one of the keys to overcoming discouragement and weariness is found in – what are you looking at / focusing on?

Are you focused on people and things around you – or are you focused on God and His call on your life?

We need to remind ourselves that God called us and that His hand is upon us – He is all we need to make it

Hebrews 12:1-3 (quoted above)

In Verse 3 we are told – to ‘consider Him’ (Jesus) lest we become weary and discouraged in our souls. Discouragement is the result of getting our eyes off Him and His call on our lives and onto the day-to-day things that stand in the way or slow things down.

When Jesus went to the cross, we are told that He was able to go ‘because of the joy that was set before Him’ He was focused on the other side of the cross.

Keep your focus on your goals and destination – and don’t let the things that come up along the way pull you off that! There will always be things that come across our paths to try to discourage us. If we let them, they will slow and hinder us. We have to make the decision to not let this happen.

Keys to getting victory over discouragement in Ministry

1) Keep your eyes on your vision, not what things look like now

2) Keep your personal relationship with God strong

(When you are weary, spending time waiting upon Him is the answer to getting refreshed)

3) If possible, have people to can turn to and talk to - other ministers

We need to be able to be real with others - especially peers in ministry and not feel like we have to put on a front for them. Ministers need to be able to be a support system for each other,

4) Seek God for wisdom about why things are not going to plan!

There are times when we may have missed God or disobeyed an instruction and now the project is not going right. It may not be that the actual project is wrong, but maybe that we are not implementing it how God intended.

5) Numerical growth is not everything!

Don't get caught up in the numbers game and feel it is all about how many people you have compared to another church down the road! Focus on God's call for you and be faithful to minister to those you have