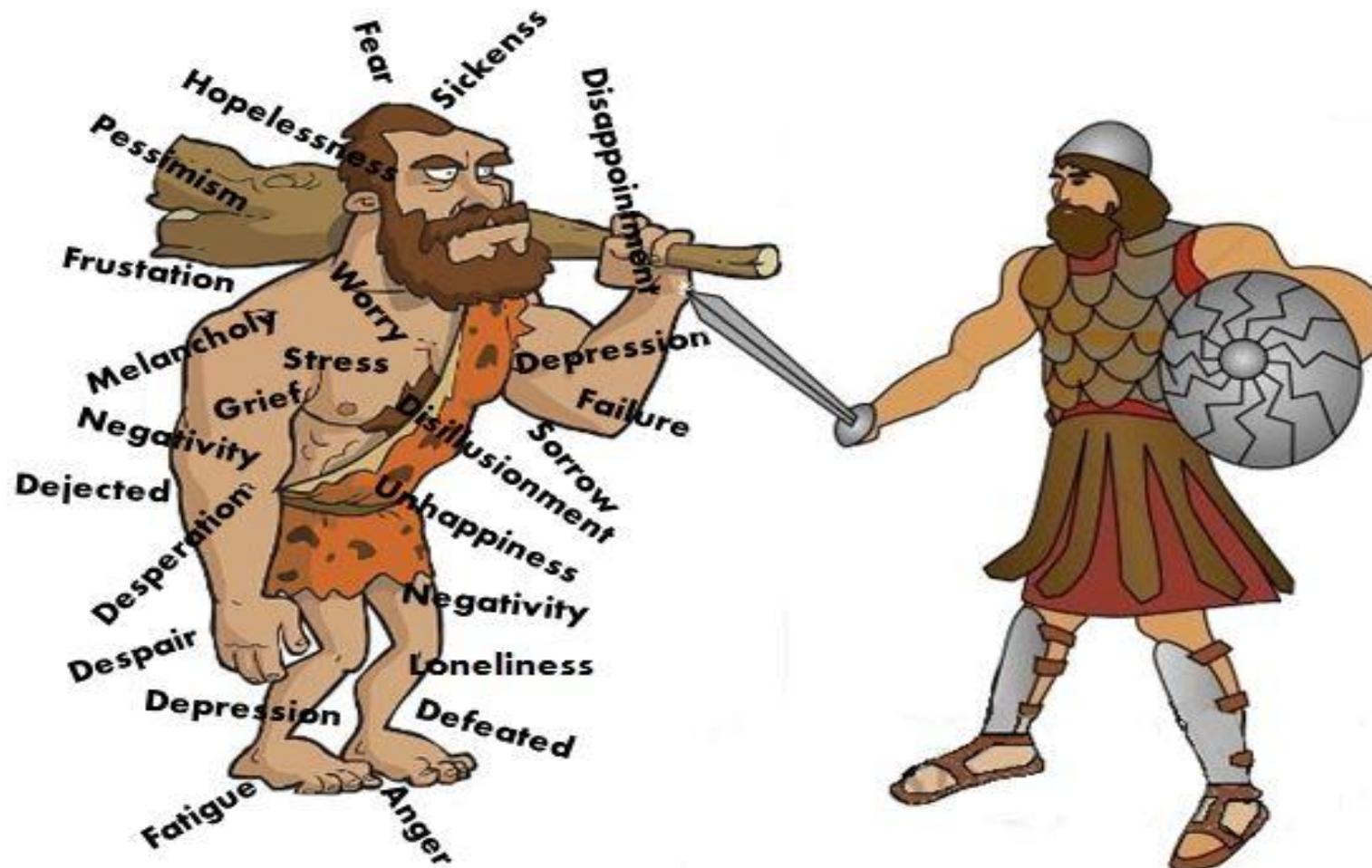


Slaying The Giant of Discouragement



DISCOURAGEMENT

Introduction:

1. **News flash** - We are living in an imperfect world.
2. Certainly, there is not one single person here today that would argue the fact that the world in which we live is imperfect.
3. We are faced with those imperfections every minute of every hour of every day of our lives. Pick up a newspaper, tune in a TV news cast, or, **if you dare**, examine your own heart.
4. Our mission today - Slaying the Giant of Discouragement
 - a. A man was driving home from work one day. He stopped to watch a Little League baseball game being played in a park near his home. As he sat down behind the bench on the first-base line, he asked one of the boys what the score was. "We're behind 14 to nothing," the little boy answered with a smile. "Really," he said. "I have to say you don't look very discouraged." "Discouraged?" the boy answered with a puzzled look on his face. "Why should we be discouraged? We haven't been up to bat yet."
 - b. "People who look through keyholes are apt to get the idea that everything is keyhole shaped.", Author Unknown.
 - c. If you are a hammer, everything looks like a nail.
 - d. "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.", Author Anaïs Nin.
***** THIS is our major problem !!!**
 - e. Discouragement has **EVERYTHING** to do with "perspective" (your mental view or outlook).
5. First let me say, the issues and discouragements we face today are no different than those with which the men and women of God have struggled for centuries.
6. For an example: let's look back in history some 3,500 years.
 - a. You all know the story.
 - b. The children of Israel had wandered in the desert for a generation.
 - c. They were encamped near the Jordan river and Moses sent twelve spies into the land of Canaan.
 - d. Can't you just hear the first ten spies upon their return, "Moses, Moses !!! There are giants in the land! Moses, Moses, We are afraid !!!"
 - e. The spies were fearful and became discouraged. WHY? Because entering into the promised land was not going to be easy. **They forgot God was for them.**
 - f. There were obstacles, large obstacles, and great difficulty in their path.
7. Did you know that the word "*discourage(d)*" is used only 7 times in the entire Bible?
 - a. Moses used that word to describe the very event I just described.
 - b. In Numbers 32:7, Moses, speaking to the children of Gad and to the children of Ruben said, "*And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?*"
 - c. The Hebrew word here translated *discourage* is quite interesting. It is the Hebrew word - noo, which means - to refuse, to forbid, to dissuade, or neutralize: - to break or disallow, to discourage, or to make of none effect.
 - d. Consider that word 'noo'. We could just as easily say - no.

- e. Discouragement in your heart always says no!
 - f. One of the Devil's most powerful and destructive tools is discouragement.
 - g. Discouragement can stop you dead in your tracks.
8. In our day it is especially easy to become discouraged.
- a. The word "discouraged" is used **only** once in the New Testament in Col. 3:21, "*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*"
αθηρωσιν "ath- oo-mo-sin" – spiritless, disheartened.
 - b. The other words most often used to express this thought are "faint" or "faint not".
 - c. Those words appear quite often in the letters Paul wrote.
 - d. For example, in II Cor. 4:1 Paul said it is possible to be discouraged in the ministry, "*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;*".
 - e. Later in that chapter Paul warned that we are not to be discouraged by the perishing, or aging, of the outward man, II Cor. 4:16, "*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*"
 - f. Have you ever looked in the mirror and exclaimed, "Who is that old person staring back at me?"
 - g. It is so very easy to look at the frailties of life and become discouraged.

II. Three Stages of Discouragement

1. Consider the story of Elijah in I Kings 18.
 - a. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to cry out to their gods to send down fire to consume the sacrifice.
 - b. From morning till noon the prophets cried out, "*O Baal, hear us*", but nothing.
 - c. They wailed and cried and cut themselves with knives, but still nothing.
 - d. On they wailed and prophesied until evening, and still nothing. No fire from heaven, not a sizzle, not a spark, not even a small puff of smoke. **NOTHING!**
 - e. Why - because their gods were as dead and lifeless as the ground upon which they danced.
 - f. Elijah dug a trench around the sacrifice and poured twelve barrels of water on it, till the water filled the trench, and then he prayed to the God of Heaven and God responded with fire from Heaven.
 - g. I Kings 18:38 says God, "*...consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.*"
 - h. Verse 39 says, "*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, He is God.*"
 - i. **AGAIN** - I repeat – It has **EVERYTHING** to do with perspective !!!
2. Elijah had a glorious mountain-top experience which he maintained throughout his life, right?
 - a. Sadly, no he did not!
 - b. When you have great success, almost always there is an immediate let down or challenge.
 - c. In the very next chapter we find Elijah sitting under a juniper tree so discouraged he said, "*...It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life;*", I Kings 19:4.
 - e. In his conversation with God, Elijah complained to God, "*...I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away*"
 - d. Why was Elijah discouraged? (**Handout - Point I**)
 - He focused on fear instead of faith.

- **He was filled with worry instead of wonder.**
 - **He was consumed with cowardice instead of courage.**
 - e. Is any one of us less prone to discouragement than Elijah? Absolutely not !
 - f. In II Peter 3:17 Peter gives a clear warning that we all should heed, “...*seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.*”
 - g. “*these things*” What things? - Examples like Elijah, the warnings all around you. If you do not see it, it is only because you **ARE NOT** looking!
 - h. προγινωσκοντες - prog-in-occe-kon-tes - to know beforehand.
3. Now, let us consider three possible reasons for discouragement.

II. Three Reasons For Discouragement

A. Hardness of the way, Num. 21:4

1. Here the word is קצר, qatsar (kaw-tsar') - to be short, be impatient, be vexed, be grieved .
2. Israel had been preserved by God's mercy for 38 years
3. They were refused passage through Edom
4. The valley from there to the Red Sea was called a "horrible desert".
5. Their complaints brought fiery serpents from God.

B. Difficulty of the task, Nehemiah 4:10

1. Enthusiasm of the builders cooled.
2. The magnitude of the task began to frighten them.
3. Vs. 6 tells us that the wall was only half built.
4. The enthusiasm of beginning has passed; but the excitement of completion had not yet come.
5. The “*dreary stretch in the middle*” requires faith and determination to plod on.
6. Brick upon brick, stone upon stone. The way to completion is very often not easy and takes time.

C. Delay in fulfilment of desire, Pr. 13:12

1. Desire - תאוה, ta'avah (tah-av-aw'); longings of one's heart
2. **TRUE** wisdom teaches us to set our hope not on the unsatisfying things of earth.
3. Though our hope and faith in God is often exercised with long waiting, it will not disappoint us.
4. Honoring and pleasing God should fill our hearts. Leave the details up to Him.

D. The Four “F”s that lead to discouragement (from Nehemiah 4).

1. Fatigue
2. Frustration (criticism)
3. Failure
4. Fear

III. Six Wrongs (Results) of Discouragement (**Handout point II**)

A. We “**pray**” the wrong prayer.

1. Moses prayed for God to kill him, Numbers 11:10-15.
2. Elijah sat under a juniper tree and asked God to let him die, I Kings. 19:4
3. Jonah asked God to take his life, Jonah 4:3.

B. We “**say**” the wrong things.

1. Our mind and our mouths become disconnected.

- a. Eccl. 5:2, “*Let not thy thine heart be hasty to utter.*”
- b. Mt. 12:34, “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*”
- 2. “*...a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*”, Pr. 29:20
- 3. Saul cried out for vengeance, “*...that I may be avenged...*”, I Sam. 14:24
- C. We “**think**” the wrong things.
 - 1. John the Baptist, discouraged in prison. Mt. 11:3,4; Jesus said, “*...shew John again...*”.
 - 2. Mary and Martha, Jn. 11:32-35, The effect on Jesus, “*...he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled*”.
- D. We “**see**” the wrong things.
 - 1. Israel’s spies saw giants in the land instead of God, Num. 13.
 - 2. The disciples saw difficulty & danger instead of Jesus’ power.
- E. We “**get**” in the wrong place.
 - 1. Jonah ended up in the belly of the fish, Jonah 1:17.
 - 2. Elijah fled and ended up under the Juniper tree, I. Kings. 19:3.
 - 3. **Where is your hiding place?**
- F. We “**show**” the wrong spirit.
 - 1. Moses smiting the rock, Num. 20:8,11
 - 2. Moses & Aaron rebelled against God, and suffered the same punishment.
 - 3. Discouragement and bitterness go hand-in-hand.
 - 4. “*...this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.*”, Jer. 4:18.
 - 5. Left to fester, discouragement turns into bitterness which will consume you and destroy your usefulness for God.

IV. Seven Reasons to be Encouraged

- A. God provides - Blessings in the Journey of Life, Gen. 26:24
 (“*fear not, for I am with thee.*”)
- B. God provides - Supplies even in Famine, I Kings. 17:13, 14
 (“*Fear not; go and do*”) - emphasize “**DO**”!
- C. God provides - Protection in Peril, II Kings. 6:16
 (“*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*”)
- D. God provides - Strength in Weakness, Is. 41:10
 (“*Fear thou not; for I am with thee:*”)
- E. God provides - Companionship in Trials, Is. 43:1-3
 (“*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee*”) - we are **NEVER EVER** alone!
- F. God provides - Overshadowing Care, Mt. 10:30, 31
 (“*Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*”)
- G. God provides - Life Beyond the Grave, Rev. 1:17, 18
 (“*And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*”)

Perspective !!!



Hope

Is An EXTREMELY powerful force

V. Hope (the opposite of discouragement) is an EXTREMELY powerful force!

- A. Hope shines brightest when times are darkest.
- B. Hope motivates when despair comes.
- C. Hope energizes when weariness comes.
- D. Hope sweetens when bitterness sours.
- E. Hope sings when all melodies are gone.
- F. Hope believes when evidence is lacking.
- G. Hope listens when everyone is silent.
- H. Hope helps when others persecute.
- I. Hope endures when no one cares.
- J. Hope smiles when no one is laughing.
- K. Hope presses on when no one is encouraging.
- L. Hope gives when others take.
- M. Hope brings victory when others are losing.

VI. One Final Thought

- A. Remember the story of Elijah? (Mention verses re: “encourage”)
- B. Here is the first verse of a song written by a fundamental, music evangelist I know.

Don't Quit

Elijah moaned as he sat beneath the tree,
God, I'm all alone, there's no one left but me,
Then God said to him in a still small voice,
Seven thousand still make me their choice.
Don't quit - there's a job to be done;
Don't quit - there's a race to be run;
Don't quit - there's a crown to be won.
Don't quit, weary Christian, Don't quit.

- C. Lay aside your feeble excuses.
Believe God and “choose” (your perspective) to be encouraged.
Watch Him work a miracle in your heart!

I repeat - Don't quit.

Jdg 20:22 And the people the **men of Israel encouraged themselves**, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

1Sa 30:6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: **but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.**

2Ch 31:4 Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that **they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.**

2Ch 35:2 And he set the priests in their charges, and **encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD,**

Defeating Discouragement

Do Right

Don't Quit