

Understanding Discouragement

Key Verse

"From the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I."
Psalm 61:2

Basic Biblical Understanding

What is discouragement from a biblical perspective? The word "discourage" is made up of two words. The root word is "courage." The prefix "dis" means "the opposite of." Simply stated, discouragement is the opposite of courage.

This concept is translated in Scripture as dismayed, disheartened, faint-hearted, little-spirited, feeble-minded, or discouraged. This person has lost confidence, is deprived of personal courage, and lacks desire to move forward in life.

That definition surprises some people. People tend to think of discouragement as being "a little depressed," maybe "upset over a situation," or "going through a rough patch." They don't think of discouragement as losing their courage or energy to go forward.

In practical terms, when one's courage is extinguished, the mountain seems too steep, the valley appears too dark, or the battle is too fierce. We lose the courage to continue. At one point, we had the energy and even the enthusiasm to fight; now, we just want to walk away. We don't want to deal with it. Instead of pressing on, we want to escape to a place of comfort, calmness, and perceived normalcy.

Everyone faces discouragement from time to time. Discouragement isn't something that just lurks in sinful areas or hits emotionally unstable people. It comes from anywhere and can impact anyone. It's a normal (initial) response to deep hurt, prolonged difficulty, destroyed dreams, or sudden—typically, emotionally overwhelming—news.

Finally, our level of discouragement can fluctuate dramatically in different seasons of life. There are times when we handle problems or difficult news in a better way than at other times. In those seasons, we roll with the punches. There are other times when we get caught in a perfect storm of unending stress, personal fatigue, spiritual dryness, and/or emotional isolation. In those moments, we just curl up under life's punches. However, remember that levels of discouragement can fluctuate, but take heart in realizing that Christ-honoring methods for battling discouragement remain the same.

Verses (ask God to show you how they apply to your life)

- "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9
- "Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

Helpful Questions and Application

1. What areas of your life have you lost the courage to move forward? Based on the Bible references listed in this article, what are three steps you could do immediately to regain courage in those areas?
2. Discouragement and isolationism tend to go hand in hand. When we're hurting deeply, it just seems easier to not be around others. However, an outside perspective can help us see what we're not able to see in the moment. Do you know someone who is biblically grounded and willing to help you process your discouragement? Contact this person ASAP...hopefully, that will be today.

Additional Resources

Scripture references: Psalm 31:24; Romans 8:26; Romans 8:31

WordTruth article: [Trusting in God in Trials Out of Our Control](#)
[Initial Responses to Life's Challenges](#)
[Don't Give Up](#)