



2019 August Series: All in the Family

Message #4: Overcoming Family Discouragement

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: Perspective / Opening Illustration of the Devil's Tool Sale: It was advertised that the Devil was putting up for sale all of his tools. On that date the tools were laid out. They had prices marked on them for public inspection, and there were a lot of treacherous instruments: hatred, envy, jealousy, deceit, pride, lying, and so on. Laid apart from the rest of the Devil's tools was a tool, but it was worn more than any of the others and was priced very high. "What's the name of this tool?" asked one of the customers. "That," the Devil replied, "is discouragement." "Why have you priced it so high?" "Because discouragement is more useful to me than all the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's heart with that when I cannot get near him with any other tools. It's badly worn because I use it on almost everyone, since so few people know it belongs to me."

Discouragement is still the Devil's tool. Not many people realize he's using it on us, and he's using it on some of us here today. Life is full of discouraging circumstances. Even the most blessed people, the most successful, the most spiritually mature, face constant disappointment and discouragement. And families face these same tools of our enemy.

Transition: The aim of my sharing this with you today is that you would honestly face the problems served up to you in life without fooling yourself, without giving up... and to learn from the life of Joseph on how to overcome it.

Illustration from Stan Toler about not being discouraged: A man stopped to watch a Little League baseball game. He asked one of the youngsters what the score was. "We're losing 18-0," was the answer. "Well," said the man. "I must say you don't look discouraged." "Discouraged?" the boy said, puzzled. "Why should we be discouraged? We haven't got to bat yet." (Stan Toler, *God Has Never Failed Me, but He's Sure Scared Me to Death a Few Times* (Honor Books, 1995))

God's Take on Family Discouragement:

Let's take a peek at a small portion of Joseph's life as a boy... NKJV | Ge 37:12-19 **Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So, he said to him, "Here I am." 14 Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks and bring back word to me." So, he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. 15 Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?" 16 So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks." 17 And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So, Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. 18 Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. 19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!**

NLT | Ge 50:20 **You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.**

This is a family conflict about to change Joseph's life forever... and set a course to frustration and years of discouragement...

How to Face the Problems Without Giving Up:

1. Life is very hard. So, acknowledge it.

No one knew this reality better than Joseph. When he was a baby, his mother died. His father was a pretty old fellow, and even though he was famous in the Bible, he was something of a scoundrel, not an easy father to live with. Joseph's brothers hated him. They mistreated him, and finally they betrayed him and sold him into slavery. He was torn from his home and he became a slave. He had no rights. Then he was falsely accused. He wasn't given a fair trial. He was thrown into prison, and there he was forgotten. If anybody ever knew how hard life is, it was Joseph.

Illustration of a famous American: The life of Joseph reminds me of the life of another person. When he was seven years old, his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality. He had to go to work to help support his family. At the age of nine his mother died. At 22 he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education wasn't good enough. At 23 he went into debt to become a partner in the small store. At 26 his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At 28 after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him. She said no. At 37, on his third try, he was elected to Congress, but two years later he failed to be re-elected. At 41 his boy died. At 45 he ran for the Senate and lost. At 47 he failed as a candidate for vice president. At 49 he ran for the Senate again and lost. At 51 he was elected president of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln... a person many people consider to be the finest leader we've ever had. Some people have all the luck.

- **Life's discouragement varies from the different stages of life.** Life is hard for most people. Life's discouragements vary from stage to stage in life. When you're a little child, there are certain things that are difficult. When you're a teenager there are others. A teenager is discouraged when she looks in the mirror or looks at her figure, or when he doesn't have many friends, or doesn't make good grades, or doesn't make the team, or doesn't get a part in a play. There are certain things that are real and discouraging when we're young. As we get older, our problems change. Health issues and financial burdens and employment disappointments. **Every stage of life has its problems.**
- **Life's discouragements are inevitable.** I'm wondering how life is hard for you today. I'm wondering what discouraging events you are encountering. Perhaps you don't have enough money. Everybody has that problem. Maybe your business or your job hasn't worked out to your expectations. Maybe you're facing the problem of alcoholism or the problem of barrenness. Maybe you're facing a divorce. Maybe you've lost someone through death. Maybe your marriage is bad. Maybe you don't have a marriage to be bad or good. Maybe you're lonely. Maybe you don't have many friends. Maybe you can't seem to locate your niche in life. Maybe there's a problem of physical or emotional abuse in your home. I don't know what your problem is, and you may not have any problems. I say "Hallelujah!" with you if you don't. But you will, because life is hard.
- **We are not alone in life's discouragements.** Whatever your problem is, there are more people in this church who have that same problem than you would ever guess. You know, when we're really honest, our church is like a school of hard knocks, and our school colors black and blue. **We can all confess...Life is hard. AMEN.** And we must be careful with this truth...

2. Poor decisions can be made when dealing with it... So, watch it.

Now, there are three ways of dealing with life's discouragements. First,

- **We can give into it.** Five thousand teenagers every year commit suicide in America. Children are realizing earlier and earlier that life is hard. And there's a great temptation to give in, to accept the fear and discouragement.

Now Elijah, the greatest prophet in the Old Testament, had this very experience of life's problems, and he chose the option to give in and to give up. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah is alone. He has just had what you would call a great mountaintop experience in which he's experienced the power and reality of God in a way none of us has ever experienced. He was God's man for his generation, there was nobody like him.

Then, because he angered the queen and she threatened to kill him within 24 hours, he became afraid and ran for his life. He came to Beersheba and left his servant there. He went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life. I'm no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

There were two voices whispering in Elijah's ear, and there are two voices that whisper in our ear in the face of difficulty. One is the voice of Satan, and it says, "Give up." The other is the voice of God, which says, "I'm the Lord your God. Nothing is impossible with me."

Perhaps in no area of life over the last few years have I observed the difficulties people encounter any more than in the area of marriage. Some of you are in trouble in your marriages, and you're the only ones who know it. Some of you are hurting, discouraged, angry in your marriages. One voice is whispering in your ear, "Give up. Forget it. Go your own way."

That's the voice Elijah listened to, and that's the first option, the first way of dealing with discouragement. That option is not acceptable to God, **The second option in dealing with discouragement is...**

- **We can deny it.** Some people tend to minimize the problems they're encountering: "I know we're in debt, but oh, it's going to work out sometime, sooner or later." "I know I've lost my job. Every time I've had a job, I've lost it, but I just haven't found an employer who can understand me." **That's denying the problem within.**

Simon Peter chose this option: Jesus said, "Peter, you're going to deny me." Peter said, "Oh no, Lord. I'll never deny you!" But just a few hours later He did deny Jesus. Peter denied the problem.

Some of you have experienced anger and hurt in your marriage and you haven't been talking to your mate. There's a coldness that's settled in. But you won't acknowledge it. If that's you today... You're on dangerous ground. **The 3rd option is...**

- **Or you can face your discouragement like Joseph did.**

Transition: How did Joseph handle his discouraging moments?

Our Action Response:

How Did Joseph Handle the Hard Knocks He Faced? The tragedies in Joseph's life were basically out of his control. He accepted those tragedies and made the best that he could out of them. As I reread the story, I noticed five little observations about Joseph that enabled him to face his troubles with honesty and faithfulness.

1. **He never lost sight of his relationship with the Lord.**

- Over and over again the story says, "And the Lord was with Joseph." He never lost sight of his relationship with the Lord. He prayed. He meditated on the truths of God. He didn't have any church to go to, but he didn't turn his back on God. He was faithful in his relationship to God, and God was with him.
- **Do you want to overcome your difficulties? Maintain your relationship with God, first of all.**

2. **He refused to give into temptation in the rough times.**

- You see this in the life of Joseph in the incident with Potiphar's wife. She presented to him a ticket to freedom and security, not to mention all sorts of delights. But he refused to disobey God.
- **Do you want to live a victorious life over tough times? Look for the way of dealing with difficulty that is absolutely pleasing to God.**

3. **He never allowed the focus to be about him.**

- Joseph always gave himself tirelessly to any work that was to be done, even when he was in prison. He always took an active interest in other people. You see this even in jail, as he got involved in the life of the cupbearer and baker from the royal palace.
- **Illustration of Dr. Karl Menninger, the famous psychiatrist,** once gave a lecture on mental health and was answering questions from the audience. Someone said, "What would you advise a person to do if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?" Most people thought he would say, "Go see a psychiatrist immediately," but he didn't. To their astonishment. Dr. Menninger replied, "Lock up your house, go across the railroad tracks, find somebody in need, and help that person."
- **Another step to overcoming discouragement: Don't focus on yourself. Get involved in the lives of other people.**

4. **He chose to never be paralyzed in his circumstances.**

- Joseph took whatever steps he could to solve his problems. As an example, when he was in prison, he begged the cupbearer to the king, when he was reinstated, to put in a good word with Pharaoh for him. The fellow didn't do it, but Joseph was always seeking to get out of his difficult situation. There was no paralysis of action.
- **Another way... You've got to initiate whatever action you can if you're dealing with life's hard knocks. Sometimes it just means getting honest and talking with someone else.**

5. **He trusted in the sovereignty of His God.**

- Joseph believed that God was sovereign. He trusted that God was in control.
- We see this in two wonderful statements Joseph made. This is when he has been reunited with his brothers, and he's looking back. This is his comment on what happened: "Joseph

said to his brothers, NLT | Ge 45:4 “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So, they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. 5 But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.

- The second statement was in Genesis 50:20 when he makes a similar statement to his brothers: NLT | Ge 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.

Transition: Let’s close with this...

Closing:

Yes, life is hard. The Christian life is a battle. Life will serve up discouragements. There are three options: we can give in and let them defeat us and lead us to personal ruin; we can deny our problems, which leads ultimately to frustration and a kind of sick schizophrenia; or, with Joseph, we can face our problems, with honesty and with faith in God, knowing that nothing is impossible with God.

Final Illustration: In 1991, Beth Anne DeCiantis's attempted to qualify for the 1992 Olympic Trials marathon. A female runner must complete the 26-mile, 385-yard race in less than two hours, 45 minutes to compete at the Olympic Trials. Beth started strong but began having trouble around mile 23. She reached the final straightaway at 2:43, with just two minutes left to qualify. Two hundred yards from the finish, she stumbled and fell. Dazed, she stayed down for twenty seconds. The crowd yelled, "Get up!" The clock was ticking--2:44, less than a minute to go. Beth Anne staggered to her feet and began walking. Five yards short of the finish, with 10 seconds to go, she fell again. She began to crawl, the crowd cheering her on, and crossed the finish line on her hands and knees. Her time? Two hours, 44 minutes, 57 seconds.

(Hebrews 12:1) reminds us to... NLT | Heb 12:1 **Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.**