

# Avoiding Discouragement

A week ago, a close friend of many years wrote me this note:

“Because of health issues, I feel guilty for not helping the Lord in Bible study, and not going to church. I think that I am a lost man.” —*Somewhere in the U.S.*

I decided to send him a letter of encouragement, and I want to share that letter with you also.

—Vance

Christ understands each of our deepest trials and discouragements, and He looks upon us with tenderest love:

“Jesus watches our efforts with the deepest interest. **He knows that men with all the infirmities of humanity are doing His work,** and He notes their failures and discouragements with the tenderest pity.”—*5 Testimonies, 420.*

It is so easy to fall into discouragement, but let us turn away from ourselves and look to Jesus. He loves each of His faithful children, even when they are weakened and unable to do as much as in earlier years.

“Dear Sister T: I have learned of your affliction, and hasten to pen a few lines. My dear sister, I have the very best of evidence that **the Lord loves you.** . . . While strictly conscientious, and ever anxious to know the right, you were extremely sensitive and viewed your case as worse than it was. . . . Your mind is gloomy, naturally dwelling upon the dark side, imagining that the frown of God is upon you. You have thought that your life has been useless, that it has been filled with errors and wrong moves.

“Dear sister, your diseased state of health leads you to this despondency and discouragement. **God has not left you; His love is yet toward you. I saw that you should trust in Him as a child trusts itself in the arms of its mother.** God is merciful and kind, and full of tender pity and compassion. He has not turned His face from you.”—*2 Testimonies, 318.*

Jesus has shown us how to overcome, in spite of the apparent discouragements. Here is the formula:

“By passing over the ground which man must travel, **our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged** by the assaults of the serpent. ‘Be of good cheer,’ He says; ‘I have overcome the world.’ ” John 16:33 . . .

“He declares, ‘The Lord God will help Me; there-

fore shall I not be confounded: . . . and I know that I shall not be ashamed. . . . Behold, the Lord God will help Me.’ Pointing to His own example, He says to us, **‘Who is among you that feareth the Lord, . . . that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.’** Isaiah 50:7-10.

“ ‘The prince of this world cometh,’ said Jesus, ‘and hath nothing in Me.’ John 14:30. There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan’s sophistry. He did not consent to sin. **Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation.** So it may be with us. Christ’s humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us.** God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.

“And how this is accomplished, Christ has shown us. **By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the Word of God.** Only by the Word could He resist temptation. ‘It is written,’ He said. And unto us are given ‘exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ 2 Peter 1:4. **Every promise in God’s Word is ours.** ‘By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ are we to live. When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the Word. **All its strength is yours.** ‘Thy Word,’ says the psalmist, ‘have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.’ ‘By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.’ Psalm 119:11; 17:4.”—*Desire of Ages, 122-123.*

It is true that the difficulties in our path may sometimes appear to be overwhelming. But trusting in Jesus and clinging to Him, we are to press steadily forward.

“The mighty God of Israel is our God. In Him we may trust, and **if we obey His requirements He will work for us in as signal a manner as He did for His ancient people. Everyone who seeks to follow the path of duty will at times be assailed by doubt and unbelief.** The way will sometimes be so barred by obstacles, apparently insurmountable, as to dishearten those who will yield to discouragement; **but God is saying to such, Go forward. Do your duty at any cost.** The difficulties that seem so formidable, that fill your soul with dread, will vanish

as you move forward in the path of obedience, humbly trusting in God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 437.

Satan loves to discourage people. He thoroughly enjoys doing it.

“A discouraged soul is a body of darkness, not only failing himself to receive the light of God, but shutting it away from others. **Satan loves to see the effect of the pictures of his triumphs, making human beings faithless and disheartened.**”—*5 Testimonies*, 744-745.

But we must turn our eyes away from the difficulties. Do not dwell on the discouragements, but look up and behold Jesus. Look to Him and your thoughts will be lightened.

“In our work we meet with many discouragements. But **we shall not gain a particle of strength by dwelling on the discouragements.** By beholding we become changed. **As we look in faith to Jesus, His image is engraven on the heart.** We are transformed in character.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, 341.

Men of the deepest faith, who for years have pushed forward in efforts for God, have become discouraged at times. So we can expect that it will come to us at times,—but this is the very time to press forward in hope and trust in Christ our redeemer!

“**It is at the time of greatest weakness that Satan assails the soul with the fiercest temptations.** It was thus that he hoped to prevail over the Son of God; for by this policy he had gained many victories over man. **When the will power weakened and faith failed, then those who had stood long and valiantly for the right yielded to temptation.** Moses, wearied with forty years of wandering and unbelief, lost for a moment his hold on Infinite Power. He failed just on the borders of the Promised Land. So with Elijah. He who had maintained his trust in Jehovah during the years of drought and famine, he who had stood undaunted before Ahab, he who throughout that trying day on Carmel had stood before the whole nation of Israel the sole witness to the true God, in a moment of weariness allowed the fear of death to overcome his faith in God.

“And so it is today. **When we are encompassed with doubt, perplexed by circumstances, or afflicted by poverty or distress, Satan seeks to shake our confidence in Jehovah.** It is then that he arrays before us our mistakes and tempts us to distrust God, to question His love. **He hopes to discourage the soul and break our hold on God.**

“Those who, standing in the forefront of the conflict, are impelled by the Holy Spirit to do a special work, will frequently feel a reaction when the pressure is removed. Despondency may shake the most heroic faith and weaken the most steadfast will.

**But God understands, and He still pities and loves. He reads the motives and the purposes of the heart. To wait patiently, to trust when everything looks dark, is the lesson** that the leaders in God’s work need to learn. Heaven will not fail them in their day of adversity. **Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on God.**”—*Prophets and Kings*, 174-175.

What should we do when tempted by those around us to doubt and discouragement? Consider this advice to Brother J:

“If Brother J enjoyed the love of God, he would be a channel of light. He has too little moral power, with strong tendencies to unbelief. **He is pitied by the heavenly angels, for he is surrounded with darkness.** His ears hear words of unbelief and darkness almost continually. **He has doubts and questionings constantly thrown before him.** The tongue is a world of iniquity. ‘The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.’

“**If Brother J would cling to God more firmly and feel that he should preserve his integrity before God even at the cost of his natural life, he would receive strength from above.** If he allows his faith to be affected by the darkness and unbelief that surrounds him—the doubts and questioning and much talk—he will soon be all darkness and doubt and unbelief, and will have no light or strength in the truth.”—*4 Testimonies*, 236-237.

You dare not whisper one word of doubt or discouragement to others, lest you cause them to stumble. Instead, be a sunbeam from the Lord, shining upon everyone in your pathway.

“**How many, by their actions, if not in word, are saying, ‘The Lord does not mean this for me. Perhaps He loves others, but He does not love me.’**

“**All this is harming your own soul; for every word of doubt you utter is inviting Satan’s temptations;** it is strengthening in you the tendency to doubt, and it is grieving from you the ministering angels. **When Satan tempts you, breathe not a word of doubt or darkness.** If you choose to open the door to his suggestions, your mind will be filled with distrust and rebellious questioning. If you talk out your feelings, every doubt you express not only reacts upon yourself, but it is a seed that will germinate and bear fruit in the life of others, and it may be impossible to counteract the influence of your words . . . How important that we speak only those things that will give spiritual strength and life!

“Angels are listening to hear what kind of report you are bearing to the world about your heavenly Master. **Let your conversation be of Him who liveth to make intercession for you before the Father. When you take the hand of a friend, let praise to God be on your lips and in your heart. This will attract his thoughts to Jesus.**”—*Steps to*

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Christ, 118-119.

Those wonderful words of counsel then continue on:

"All have trials; griefs hard to bear, temptations hard to resist. **Do not tell your troubles to your fellow mortals, but carry everything to God in prayer.** Make it a rule never to utter one word of doubt or discouragement. **You can do much to brighten the life of others and strengthen their efforts, by words of hope and holy cheer.**

"There is many a brave soul sorely pressed by temptation, almost ready to faint in the conflict with self and with the powers of evil. Do not discourage such a one in his hard struggle. **Cheer him with brave, hopeful words that shall urge him on his way.** Thus the light of Christ may shine from you. 'None of us liveth to himself.' Romans 14:7. **By our unconscious influence others may be encouraged and strengthened,** or they may be discouraged, and repelled from Christ and the truth."—*Steps to Christ, 119-120.*

Others who are trying to do their best frequently need our encouragement.

"We are altogether too indifferent in regard to one another. **Too often we forget that our fellow laborers are in need of strength and cheer.** In times of special perplexity and burden, take care to assure them of your interest and sympathy. While you try to help them by your prayers, let them know that you do it. **Send along the line God's message to His workers: 'Be strong and of a good courage.'** Joshua 1:6."—*7 Testimonies, 185.*

In reality, everyone around you is having to meet difficulties, problems, and the temptation to discouragement,—just as you are. So, in the strength of Christ, be a source of strength to them!

"**As we partake of His Spirit, we shall regard all men as brethren, with similar temptations and trials,** often falling and struggling to rise again, battling with discouragements and difficulties, craving sympathy and help. **Then we shall meet them in such a way as not to discourage or repel them, but to awaken hope in their hearts.**"—*Ministry of Healing, 165-166.*

Talk faith, talk encouragement, and you will be a source of encouragement to those around you.

"**Let us take heed to our words. Let us talk faith, and we shall have faith.** Never give place to a thought of discouragement in the work of God. **Never utter a word of doubt.** It is as seed sown in the heart of both speaker and hearers, to produce a harvest of discouragement and unbelief."—*Evangelism, 633.*

Whenever we try to do a special work for God, we will encounter difficulties of various kinds. But clinging to Christ and doing as He would do, we are to press through to success.

"**The Lord calls for soldiers who will not fail**

**nor be discouraged;** but who will accept the work with all its disagreeable features. **He would have us all take Christ for our pattern.**"—*Christian Service, 240.*

What is needed is watchfulness and prayer.

"**Those who today teach unpopular truths need not be discouraged if at times they meet with no more favorable reception,** even from those who claim to be Christians, than did Paul and his fellow workers from the people among whom they labored. **The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayers, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus.**"—*Acts of the Apostles, 230.*

It is so easy to feel that others do not appreciate the value or importance of what you are trying to do, but at such times remember that Jesus encountered similar situations.

"**Those who are tempted to think that their labor is not appreciated, and are inclined to be discouraged, should remember that Jesus had just as hard hearts to deal with, and had a more trying experience than they have had or ever can have.** He taught the people with patient love. His deep, searching wisdom knew the wants of every soul among His listeners; and when He saw them refuse the message of peace and love that He came to give them, His heart felt anguish to the very depths."—*Gospel Workers, 49.*

Consider the experience of Job. In spite of the deepest tragedies which struck his life, he pushed himself above them all—and declared his utter confidence in God and the wonderful future that God had for him:

"**From the depths of discouragement and despondency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God.** Triumphant he declared:

"**'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: . . . He also shall be my salvation.'** 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. . . . And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' Job 13:15, 16; 19:25-27."—*Prophecies and Kings, 163-164.*

At that moment of apparently deepest difficulty and discouragement,—you are especially close to victory!

"**To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest.** They will look back with thankfulness upon the darkest part of their way. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly,' 2 Peter 2:9. From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience."—*Desire of Ages, 528.*

Here is a basic cause of the problem. Here is counsel that we all need to take to heart:

"**When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned**

away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind. Do not be misled by his devices . . .

**"We should not make self the center** and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. **Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him.** Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears. Say with the apostle Paul, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Galatians 2:20. **Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror** through Him that has loved you."—*Steps to Christ*, 71-72.

Praise to the Lord and songs of thanksgiving to Him—are both powerful means of resisting the temptation to discouragement. Indeed, as I have found out myself,—praising the Lord makes an instantaneous change in one's outlook! Here are two statements about this:

"Let praise and thanksgiving be expressed in song. When tempted, instead of giving utterance to our feelings, **let us by faith lift up a song of thanksgiving to God.**

**"Song is a weapon that we can always use against discouragement.** As we thus open the heart to the sunlight of the Saviour's presence, we shall have health and His blessing."—*Ministry of Healing*, 254.

**"If there was much more praising the Lord,** and far less doleful recitation of discouragements, **many more victories would be achieved.**"—*Evangelism*, 499.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look fully into His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

"Many who are sincerely seeking for holiness of heart and purity of life seem perplexed and discouraged. They are constantly looking to themselves, and lamenting their lack of faith; and because they have no faith, they feel that they cannot claim the blessing of God. **These persons mistake feeling for faith. They look above the simplicity of true faith, and thus bring great darkness upon their souls. They should turn the mind from self, to dwell upon**

the mercy and goodness of God and to recount His promises, and then simply believe that He will fulfill His Word.

**"We are not to trust in our faith, but in the promises of God.** When we repent of our past transgressions of His law, and resolve to render obedience in the future, we should believe that God for Christ's sake accepts us, and forgives our sins.

"Darkness and discouragement will sometimes come upon the soul, and threaten to overwhelm us; but we should not cast away our confidence. **We must keep the eye fixed on Jesus, feeling or no feeling. We should seek to faithfully perform every known duty, and then calmly rest in the promises of God.**"—*Messages to Young People*, 111.

Think it not strange when discouragement is suddenly thrown at you. Amid every problem, turn your eyes upon Jesus!

**"The servants of the Lord must expect every kind of discouragement.** They will be tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of friends and helpers."—*Christian Service*, 239-240.

As you cling to His hand and "follow on to know the Lord," you will have help from above.

**"You long for a fuller, deeper sense of the Saviour's love. You are unsatisfied. But do not despair. Give to Jesus the heart's best and holiest affections. Treasure every ray of light. Cherish every desire of the soul after God.** Give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts and holy communings. You have seen but the first rays of the early dawn of His glory. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that His going forth is prepared as the morning. **'The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'** Having repented of our sins, confessed them, and found pardon, we are to continue to learn of Christ, until we come into the full noontide of a perfect gospel faith."—*8 Testimonies*, 318.

"Victory, victory" is our cry! Holding Christ's hand, we keep pressing onward, upward, taking others with us as we go. Read this:

"When in the day of final awards, the reward is given to each as his works have been, **it is your privilege to have redeemed souls whom you have been the means of helping, come to you and say, 'You lifted me out of discouragement.'** And the Master will say to you, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'"—*Sons and Daughters of God*, 279.

—Vance