

OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT!

-Today we are going to talk about life and how we can overcome times of discouragement and adversity.

-Could someone share with us some times when you may have felt overwhelmed and discouraged? Maybe a move, the lost of a loved one, raising small children, a new job, declining health, etc. (...)

-Have you ever grown tired and weary, weak and discouraged?(...)

-Do you ever question if God cares about what is happening to you?(...)

-Do you ever have times when you find it difficult to rejoice in God's goodness? (...)

-Now, let's turn the tables and name some times when you really celebrated your life? Can someone share with us some of those celebrations? (A wedding, birth of a baby, new job, salvation, etc...)

-Now, here is a tough one. How do you celebrate when the dark clouds of doubt, despair, disease and discouragement come? (...) Can you even celebrate, and if so, what does that look like? (...)

-Do you think Jesus ever felt despair and discouragement while He was here on this earth? If so, give some examples. (Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed for the cup to pass [Luke 22:42-44 "He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father if You are willing, take this cup from Me, yet not My will, but Yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."]; then at The Cross[Mark 14:34 when He said "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"], and then when He saw Jerusalem and knew what was going to happen to it [Luke 19:41 "As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it."], etc.)

-So we can say from scripture that there were times when Jesus felt in His human side discouragement or despair.

-How many of you remember the story of the Temptation of Christ by Satan in the desert that was written in the book of Matthew? (...)

-How many days did it last?(40)

-Just imagine, for 40 long days Satan tempted Christ.

-We have something to learn from this story and that is what we are going to do today to understand how to overcome discouragement and despair by Jesus Himself.

-Let's start off by reading our first verse together on our Verse Sheet: (Matthew 4:3&6 "And when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread...' And (Satan) saith unto Him, 'If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in [their] hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.'")

-What is Satan wanting Jesus to question here when he asks Him "IF Thou be the Son of God"? (His identity as God's Son.)

-Just as Jesus was tempted by Satan to question His identity, so are we when we face problems and setbacks.

-Do you ever ask, if I am God's child, why is He allowing this to happen to me? (...)

-We may wonder sometimes why God permits certain things to happen to us if He truly loves us. We may fear that He doesn't really care about us or what happens to us because if He did He wouldn't allow these certain things to happen.

-How can these feelings be devastating to our faith if we continue in them? (We may stop believing in Him and grow bitter towards Him. We may put the blame on Him instead of the true enemy, Satan.)

-These feelings can be devastating to our faith and relationship to God if our thoughts end by looking at ourselves and situations instead of turning to God and His Word.

-We are going to see how Jesus shows us this example of turning to God's Word.

-Let's read verse #2 together on our verse sheet to help us with this. We are going to read Jesus' response to Satan: (Matthew 4:4 *"But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*)

-Notice the first 8 words, what do they say? ("But He answered and said, 'It is written.'")

-First off, notice Jesus addressed Satan with God's own Words by saying "It is written".

-Whose written Word is Jesus using to rebuke Satan? (God's Word, the Bible.)

-Where should we go when we are being attacked by the enemy with despair and discouragement? (God's Word)

-Jesus relied on God's Word, His own Word, to defeat the enemy who was trying to discourage and question His identity, and we should follow His example.

-What can that look like for us today? Give some examples (...)

-Let's continue with the second part of this verse.

-What do you think Jesus meant when He said "Man shall not live by bread alone"? What kind of bread do you think He is talking about? (Bread, water, food, clothing, money, material things, etc.)

-He then tells us how we can truly live. What does He say in the last part of this verse? (...But by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.)

-What do you think this means? (Living life, the kind that is enjoyable and full of peace and satisfaction, cannot be truly fulfilled by bread, water, money and things. It takes more than these things to have a life full of inner joy, peace and satisfaction. It takes knowing and living God's Words every day.)

-Jesus then continues to show how life can truly be lived by His next response to Satan in the next verse. Let's read it together, #3 on our Verse Sheet: (Matthew 4:10 *"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."*)

-He proceeds to tell Satan that according to God's Words we are to WORSHIP God and SERVE Him only.

-What do you think He means here? (That whatever situation we find ourselves in, we need to Worship God and trust Him completely. His Words of truth, the Bible, teach us how to worship Him, trust Him and serve Him even in the midst of temptations and struggles, and when we do, we can have a life of peace and joy and hope in whatever we are going through because God is Who He is, Yahweh, eternal, sovereign, and our ever-present Helper.)

-How can we apply God's Word, just like Jesus did, to our own temptations of discouragement and despair? (We can look in the Bible and read His promises and know that He never breaks His promises. We can memorize and speak verses that help us in our battles when

Satan tries to discourage us. We can use scripture against him just as Jesus did. And then, most of all, we worship Him, no matter what, just because He is Who He is, the one and only true God!)

-You see, God's words, His promises in scripture are reminders of His care and concern for each one of us and it is a powerful weapon against the enemy.

-Let me ask you this question, do you believe that when you confessed your sins and asked Jesus to be Lord of your life, that He did?

-Do you believe that you became His child, His son or His daughter?

-Do you believe that your identity is now in Him, that you are His child no matter what Satan says?

-Let's read what God's Word says about this, #4 on our Verse Sheet: (John 1:12-13 "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to *become children of God*—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.")

-Because it is His promise in scripture that if we believe He did this for us, asked for forgiveness of our sins and accept Him as Lord, we are His child and we are going to spend eternity with Him in heaven!

-Even though we believe this, can there still be dark days in our lives? (Yes!)

-Look at Jesus' own walk on earth. He had many dark days but yet He knew Who's He was!

-I know all of us have been through dark days. How did you get through it? (Give time for some answers.) Hopefully scripture helped as Jesus Himself used it so many times against Satan.

-A program on a nature channel describes birds that live at the tip of South America where there are high winds and cold, stormy weather. These birds build their nests and raise their young in the cliffs overlooking the ocean and have learned to live and thrive in that bleak environment.

-As Christians, we too, must learn to nest in the inevitable gales of life.

-Let's read #5 together on our verse sheet: (Matt. 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.")

-What is the Lord Jesus telling us here? (God helps us survive in life's storms and not to fear.)

-What is the opposite of fear? (Peace!)

-A young soldier in Iraq writes to his pastor that he finds great comfort and peace in Psalm 46: 1-3, 7. Let 's read it together to find out why. It is #6 on our verse sheet: (Psalm 46:1-3,7 "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.")

-Why do you think these verses would be helpful to a soldier serving in a difficult and dangerous place? (Give time for some answers.)

-What comfort can you find in these verses right now in your own life? (Give time for some answers.)

-Let's read together verse #7 on our sheet: (Isaiah 40:29-31 "He gives strength to the weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.")

-What are His Words of promise to us here? (That He gives His children strength. That when all around us seems to be falling apart, we need to remember that we are His children and He gives us the strength to run the race He has called us to do and will help us finish it for His glory! Our identity is in Him and not our circumstances!)

-From all these verses and Jesus' Own example, we can see that our identity in God does not depend on sunny circumstances or the absence of conflict and stress. Rather it comes from knowing that we are His children because Jesus paid the penalty for us because He loves us.

-It is through God's Word that we learn all of this and can use it against Satan when He attacks.

-Think about it, God's Word tells us He loves us! He cares about us! He gives us second chances! He is always there to give us the strength to face whatever we have been called to face. We may have fellow Christians to cheer us on sometimes but if we don't, we have the God of the universe cheering us on all the time! We have His Word to empower us and strengthen us. And that is enough to bring us hope, joy and peace in the journey!

“OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT!” VERSE SHEET

- 1. Matthew 4:3&6 “And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread... And (Satan) saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in [their] hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash thy foot against a stone.”**
- 2. Matthew 4:4&10 “*But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*”**
- 3. Matthew 4:10 “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for *it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*”**
- 4. John 1:12-13 “Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to *become children of God*—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”**
- 5. Matt. 10:29-31 “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”**
- 6. Psalm 46:1-3,7 “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”**
- 7. Isaiah 40:29-31 “He gives strength to the weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”**