

THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

February 2017

No. 374

DISCOURAGEMENT

Have you ever been discouraged? Maybe you are discouraged right now. You can be discouraged when negative events happen in your life that make you wonder if it is worth it to keep going on. It seems far easier and less painful to give up and quit rather than to continue and struggle onward through the pain. Think of a runner in a marathon race; the race is very long and he is tired and perhaps in great pain. It would be easier for the runner to stop and sit down by the road rather than push through the pain and continue onward. He wonders if he is even able to finish or if the goal of finishing is worth the suffering he has to go through.

THE HARVESTER

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When I think of examples in the Bible of discouragement, I think of the prophet Elijah. The Israelites had turned away from God. But Elijah had just been part of a wonderful miracle which demonstrated the power of God to the Israelites when fire came down from heaven to consume the burnt sacrifice, the wood, the stones of the altar and the water poured on the altar (1 Kings 18:38). Elijah had also prayed that it would rain again after 3 years and 6 months without rain and God had answered his prayer with rain. But now Queen Jezebel had promised to kill him, so he was running for his life. He was greatly discouraged.

And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. (1 Kings 19:14)

God basically told him that he should not be discouraged.

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. (1 Kings 19:18)

Elijah was discouraged and thought that everything was lost. But it wasn't true. God preserved his life and told him that there were seven thousand righteous that he didn't know about. He shouldn't have been discouraged.

During the ministry of Jesus, He taught some doctrines which were difficult to understand or accept. One doctrine was that an individual must eat His flesh and drink His blood to be His disciple. Some of His disciples did not understand and thought this was a hard doctrine.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (John 6:66-69)

When you become discouraged as a Christian, remember Peter's words. To whom shall you go? Where else is there a promise of eternal life but through following Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God? There is no other path for you to eternal life. Like the discouraged marathon runner, you must pick yourself up and push on to the goal. Eternal life is worth whatever you have to go through in this life.

You must continue in the faith.

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (Col. 1:21-23; see also 1 Cor. 15:58)

Hebrews the 11th Chapter is filled with people who could have been discouraged but chose not to give up.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (Heb. 12:1-3)

Even Jesus could have been discouraged when He faced the suffering and shame of the cross. Instead, He looked beyond the cross to the joy set before Him. You too must look beyond whatever discourages you to the joy set before you.

Don't just think about yourself and how you might be discouraged. Think about other brothers or sisters in Christ that

might be discouraged. One reason for not forsaking the assembly is so that you can encourage and exhort them.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Heb. 10:23-25)

I encourage you to not be discouraged. Never give up!

ED ANDERSON
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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What lie was told about Naboth that led to him being stoned and Ahab taking possession of his vineyard?
2. In which tribe was the city of Bethlehem (also called Ephrath or Ephratah)?
3. About what age was Jesus when he was baptized?
4. In the parable of the cloth and wine, why does no man put new wine into old bottles?
5. How many churches of Asia Minor were listed in Revelation?

Answers next month...

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT: GOODNESS

(THE KEY TO KEEPING FRIENDS)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

One surefire way of losing friends? Let them get under your skin (we're all human...sometimes it doesn't take long), then walk away and never come back.

Want to keep friends? I thought you might. This article answers the question.

“Goodness” is the last of the three fruits of the Spirit related to our interactions with our friends and loved ones, but as far as impact goes, it may be the most important one. Why? The first of this grouping is “long-suffering,” which involves patience. The second is “gentleness,” which is showing kindness and hospitality. Both of these are about other people, but only in how we feel and how we manage our feelings about them. “Goodness” is about how we respond, how we react to others. It’s not just internal emotions, it’s not overlooking faults, it’s not putting our best foot forward with kindness. Goodness is doing something, actually choosing to take action toward other people.

How can we know this? As we have already said, there is little context in a list of words. All we are left with is logic and definitions.

So, what could it mean that we should bear the fruit of “goodness?”

An easy place to start is with the obvious opposites of good and evil. In Matthew 20:15, “good” means generous, while “evil” means envious. In Matthew 6:19-23, the “evil” eye is not generous, while the “good,” or “single” eye, lays up treasure in heaven.

Let’s also compare “goodness” with the word “justice.” Justice gives a person what they are due, but goodness gives a person more, maybe a lot more. A just man sticks to what he is bound to do; a good man will go the extra mile.

Putting these two concepts together, a person who displays goodness:

- is not a person who simply gives what is earned, but
- is generous to give beyond what is deserved
- is not a person who resents having to give, but
- is a person who gives generously with an open-heart

The book of Acts describes Barnabas as a “good” man (Acts 11:22-24). He sold his property and gave it to the apostles

(Acts 4:32-37). Notice also the definition of “Barnabas,” which is “Son of Encouragement.” This man was generous both with his words and his possessions!

Dorcas was a “good” woman (Acts 9:36-39). She used her talents and made clothes that she gave away. Perhaps the disciples that lamented her passing praised her skills, but it is more likely that they praised her generosity.

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) (Eph. 5:8-9)

Based on these definitions and examples, “goodness” is doing kind things beyond what is expected. Titus 3:3-7 speaks of the goodness of God, and the abundance of the gift of his Son. This is how God has shown his goodness to us. The very next verse points to the goodness we should have in return:

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. (Titus 3:8)

To bear this fruit, we are to take action and do good beyond what is expected, beyond what is deserved. This takes the form of kindness when we show hospitality to someone who has done us wrong. This takes the form of patience when we put up with someone who gets under our skin, who smells bad, or who talks too loud, who can’t keep commitments. This means working hard for an employer even when we have decided to change jobs. Goodness is all about doing some-

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God’s harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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thing that matters, something that can be recognized, even when we have been hurt or let down or stabbed in the back.

One surefire way to lose friends? Forget goodness.

One surefire way to keep friends? Let the fruit of goodness fall from your tree in abundance.

CHAD PRINCE
(Oxford, AL)

LEAVING A LEGACY

I recently finished reading a book entitled *Love's Unending Legacy* by Janette Oke. It got me to thinking about what leaving a legacy really means. I have paraphrased some of the more important statements in the book. The first one is where the man says to his wife, "So much depends upon what we leave our children--not to them but within them." He goes on to say, "You don't just pass on faith. You have to pass on a desire for them to find a faith of their own. You have to show them daily in the way that you live that what you have is worth living and fighting and working for. A second-hand faith is no good to anyone. It has to be a faith of their own." The wife agrees and says, "That's the secret. A faith of their own. I am so thankful to God that each one of our children made their own decision to let God be in charge in their life." "And it doesn't stop there--it goes on and on. They teach and train our grandchildren, and with God's help, they can teach our great-grandchildren. It can go on and on, and never end 'til Jesus comes back," the father goes on to say.

There is a perfect example of this in the story of Naomi and Ruth. Even though Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law, her great faith in God led Ruth to want a faith of her own in Him. Ruth said to Naomi,

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God: (Ruth 1:16).

What a Godly influence Naomi must have had on Ruth! Nao-

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
February 3 - 5	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Mark Carpenter & Scott Carpenter

mi was certainly a woman who lived her faith, and Ruth saw that and wanted it for herself. God honored Naomi and Ruth for their faith in Him. God led Ruth to the field of Boaz and we can see God's hand in all of the story. The story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz is also the story of the legacy they left their children and grandchildren. Ruth and Boaz begat Obed and he had a Godly son named Jesse and Jesse had a Godly son named David--we can even trace Jesus' line back to David!

In Deuteronomy 6 we are given an admonition to first of all, *"Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"* (Deu. 6:5). We are also told to diligently teach the words that are in our hearts to our children. We should talk of them when we sit down, when we walk, we will lie down, and when we rise up. We should write them down for our children to see and know (Deu. 6:7-9).

We are given a precious promise if we follow God with all our hearts. In Psalms 103:17-18 we are told,

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children: To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

My prayer for my own children is to find a faith of their own – a faith that will be passed on to their own children and grandchildren. It starts with me as a parent, and even though I will certainly make mistakes, I pray that they will see a faith in me that they will want for their own and that a Godly legacy will be carried on for generations.

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