

# The Cure for Discouragement

Nehemiah 4

## Intro

Discouragement is universal – it affects practically every single human being, even believers. It also reoccurs and you can get discouraged numerous times throughout your life. Discouragement is also highly contagious. A discouraged person can affect another by their demeanor, words and actions. Many of the great Bible characters became discouraged. Moses in the Sinai desert; Elijah when he heard Jezebel was searching for him to take his life; and David when his son Absalom rebelled against him. It is as old as the history of humanity.

Discouragement has a way of sucking the life out of you. It deflates our hope and crushes our spirit. If we hope to conquer discouragement we need to understand that it is not just an emotion. Discouragement is also a frame of mind – a way of thinking. When we're discouraged we tend to focus on how we feel. But the remedy for discouragement is far more than an emotional change.

The word “courage” is part of the word *Discouragement*. Discouragement is a loss of courage; a loss of hope and confidence. “Disheartened” is another word for explaining the same feeling. It's a loss of heart. We recognize this when people say, “My heart isn't in it.” or “I just don't have the heart for it.”

## New Testament word for Encouragement

The Greek word translated “encourage” is “parakaleo.” It means to come alongside. In a military context, the word was used to call for reinforcements. Encouragement, like an encourager, functions as a reinforcement for life. Encouragement strengthens others—giving them courage, hope and confidence. It's usually in the form of verbal affirmation, comfort, and exhortation. When discouraged, we need encouragement as part of the cure.

The Holy Spirit is sometimes called the “parakletos.” Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “*And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Counselor [parakletos], to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you*” (John 14:16-17).

What does it mean that the Holy Spirit is the parakletos? It means that the Spirit works in us to give us His peace; His love and His joy. He comforts our hearts and minds in a troubled world. The power of the indwelling Parakletos gives us the ability to live by the Spirit. The Spirit can then produce His fruit in our lives to the glory of God the Father. What a blessing to have the Holy Spirit in our lives as our Parakletos – our Comforter, our Counselor, and our Encourager!

## Nehemiah's Story

Last week we looked at the story of Nehemiah and how he mobilized the residents of Jerusalem to rebuild a wall around the entire city of Jerusalem. Half way through the project, the people became discouraged and wanted to give up. We looked at 4 causes of why the people got discouraged. They were:

1/ Fatigue – They worked themselves to exhaustion. When you are physically and emotionally drained you get discouraged.

2/ Frustration – They were frustrated with the overwhelming project and felt discouraged.

3/ Failure – They felt frustrated and they wanted to give up. They felt they failed.

4/ Fear – They feared what people were saying and were threatened by their enemies. They became discouraged.

## **Cure For Discouragement**

Nehemiah was a wise and godly leader and he knew what was discouraging his people. He took action to rectify the problem. We can learn at least 3 things he did that helped. Here's what Nehemiah taught about defeating discouragement (Nehemiah 4):

### 1. Reevaluate & Reorganize

We read in Nehemiah 4:13, *“Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.”*

In this verse we see Nehemiah reevaluating and reorganizing their challenging situation. Basically what Nehemiah was saying, *“We are going to get this problem organized and have a better system in place.”*

The first principle in conquering discouragement is to reevaluate and reorganize your life.

Discouragement doesn't necessarily mean you are doing the wrong thing. It may just be that you are doing the right thing in the wrong way. Was it wrong for the people of God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? No but they were going about it an ineffective way and as a result they got discouraged.

When you get discouraged don't give up instead work on a new approach. Reevaluate and Reorganize.

Pray to God for wisdom and try a new approach.

James 1:5-6, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt...”*

### 2. Remember the Lord

A second way to overcome discouragement is to remember the Lord. We read in Nehemiah 4:14,

*“After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”*

What does it mean to remember the Lord? It means to seek Him, to recommit yourself to Him and to depend on Him for strength.

As believers what specifically should we remember?

- Remember His goodness and faithfulness in the past. When you recall all the good things God has done in your life, your spirit will be lifted up and your worries will subside. Count your blessings!
- Remember that the Lord's presence and closeness is with you. *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”* (Heb. 13:5).

- Remember the Lord’s promise that He gives you strength and power for what lies ahead. Just ask Him. He can give you new energy. There’s incredible motivating power in faith. Get your mind off your circumstances and focus on the Lord.

Your mind determines your emotions and feelings. If you are discouraged it is because you are focusing on discouraging thoughts. Open up your eyes and see God's closeness in the present. There is no experience in life that you'll go through that God doesn't go through with you. You are not alone; He's with you right now!

### 3/ Resist Discouragement

Another principle that Nehemiah used was to fight or resist discouragement. In Nehemiah 4:14 we read, *“Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”*

Don't give into discouragement without a fight. Don't run away from it. Resist the discouragement. Remember why you’re in this. You are in it for your loved ones, your family and not just for yourself.

As believers we are in a spiritual battle with negative forces working against us. The devil is the accuser of the brethren and he wants to defeat us by discouraging us. That’s his number one attack because he knows that a discouraged believer has limited potential. Our enemy wants to neutralize our effectiveness.

The Bible says in James 4:7-8, *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”* Surrender your life to God and then resist the devil and he will flee from you. We are at war with these negative forces. You do not have to be discouraged. It is a choice. If you're discouraged it is because you are choosing to be discouraged. “I'm just going to give in.” “I'm going to have a little pity party.” “I'm going to be discouraged.”

You don't have to be discouraged! You decide right now in your mind and heart that you will fight discouragement in your life with God’s presence and power.

### **Conclusion**

Another important part of the cure for discouragement is to participate in a community of encouragers. Do you realize that Scripture calls every member of the Church to be an encourager? *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (Hebrews 10:25). *“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...”* (I Thessalonians 5:11).

The church is meant to be a community of encouragement. One of our purposes in gathering is to encourage one another. Sometimes we come to Church more focused on receiving encouragement than giving it. It is wise to remember that we often gain encouragement most by giving it because in giving we’re obeying the Lord.