



# Life Blueprints

Overcoming Discouragement

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# I. Introduction

Have you ever felt that the song “Achy Breaky Heart” was your theme song? Do rainy days and Mondays and Tuesday and Wednesdays...get you down? Well, you’re not alone if they do. People get down in the dumps for a lot of reasons.

Have you ever had people like that in your life? I have. It reminds me of a story. I do not know if it is true or not. But supposedly when Robert Fulton was building his steam engine, his wife came to him in his workshop and said, “You’ll never get that thing to work and even if you do you’ll never be able to get it out.” Well, miraculously, according to his wife, he got it to work. It sat in his front yard as he worked to fit it on a boat. His wife came to him and said, “I don’t know why you are spending so much time on that thing, you’ll never get it to the river.” Well, miraculously, according to this wife, he got the steam engine attached to a boat and got it down to the river. His wife came down to the river and said, “I don’t know why you are wasting your time, you’ll never get that thing to start.” Well, miraculously, it did start and Fulton began moving down the river. He was happy on two accounts: one, his invention worked, and two, he left his wife back on the dock. But just then, he heard a voice calling out from the bank. It was his wife running after him saying, “You’ll never get that thing stopped. You never will.”<sup>1</sup>

## DEFINITIONS

### A. Hebrew

#### 1. Numbers 21:4 KJV

*And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.*

Cut down, grieve, mourn, trouble.

#### 2. Numbers 32:9 KJV

*For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.*

Break, disallow, make of none effect.

#### 3. Deuteronomy 1:21 KJV

*Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.*

Break down (by confusion or fear); be afraid, beat down, dismay, go down.

4. Deuteronomy 1:28 KJV

*Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.*

To faint; melt.

5. Isaiah 42:4 KJV

*He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*

To crack in pieces, break, bruise, crush, oppress.

**B. Greek**

1. Colossians 3:21 KJV

*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

To be spiritless, disheartened; to be dismayed.

**C. Webster's New World Dictionary**

To deprive of courage, hope, or confidence; dishearten.

Did you know a single cup of coffee contains enough moisture to blanket your entire neighborhood with fog fifty feet thick? <sup>2</sup>

It's amazing how such a small amount of water—spread out so thinly—can hinder our vision almost completely.

We tend to get upset when fog hinders our pilgrimage, but we forget the sun is still shining overhead, burning it away. Why do we get upset? Because we fail to maintain a proper perspective.

British statesman William Wilberforce once commented, "The objects of the present life fill the human eye with a false magnification because of their immediacy."

Problems and concerns often act like fog to obscure our present situation. They keep us from seeing things in proper perspective.

Psychologists tell us that forty-five percent of what we worry about is past, and forty-five percent is future. (Thirty percent concerns our health alone!) Only one in every ten things we worry about will ever come to pass—and we usually cannot do anything about it anyway.

## II. D—Delight Yourself In The Lord

### Psalm 37:4 NASV

*Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

No matter what's gone wrong in your life, you must remember that nothing has gone wrong with the Lord. He's still the same victorious, resurrected Jesus who has overcome the world and our archenemy, Satan. Maybe your circumstances have changed or perhaps they haven't changed and you wanted them to. That may be the reason you're discouraged. But Jesus is there. He is the same. He sees the whole picture, and He is not discouraged. Somehow you must reconnect with Him. Discouragement is when you lose God's perspective. How do you get it back? It's found in the word "delight."

It means getting your eyes back on Him. Get your joy, find your joy in Him. Get excited about Him. Be enthusiastic about Him. Spend time with Him. Enjoy His presence. Allow this time of discouragement to be the springboard into knowing Him better, fellowshiping with Him. You pour your heart out to Him. Confess your sins. Wipe the slate clean. Get those skeletons out of the closet.

Then He will put a right desire in your heart and turn around and give you that desire.

### **III. I—Invite**

#### **Proverbs 17:7 NASV**

*Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool; Much less are lying lips to a prince.*

#### **Proverbs 18:24 NASV**

*A man of many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

#### **James 5:16 NASV**

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

Invite godly friends to help you. Invite godly people who are close to you to pray for you. Share your heart with someone. Don't keep it to yourself. But don't go around announcing it to everyone either. David had Jonathan. Paul had Barnabas and Timothy. You need someone who will love you no matter what and who will tell you the truth no matter what. Get it off your mind and heart.

Get around positive people. Stay away from negative people. Get around those who are filled with joy, hope and a good sense of humor. People who will make you laugh but be sensitive to how you are feeling.

“Hey, I need a friend.”

## IV. S—Still

Be still before God. Sometimes we get discouraged because we are too busy, overcommitted, stressed out, burned out. It's easy to lose perspective. You start looking so much at the trees, you lose sight of the forest. Folks, sometimes you have to say, "Time out." "Stop the world a minute, I've gotta get off." David understood that.

### **Psalm 37:7 NASV**

*Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.*

Relax. Be still. Be silent. Listen to what God is saying to you. You may need to change some things. Your discouragement may be a wake up call. You have to believe, even when God has placed you in the waiting room. Literally, "be quiet in the Lord's presence." Look up, not around. "God, I'm going to be still and listen for You." I anticipate, I have great expectations that the answer will come.

## V. C—Commit

Commit your life, your circumstances, your discouragement, your hurt, your loss to the only One who can do something about it.

### **Psalm 37:5 NASV**

*Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*

Commit here means, “to roll over.” Picture a huge stone with the name ‘discouragement’ on it. Think of rolling that stone to a place called Calvary, to a man named Jesus.

Sometimes you can commit something to God and He shows you what to do about it. Other things, you have to commit to God and simply let Him totally deal with them in His time, in His way.

Simply know that when you do that you give God the freedom to work in your life. Until then, you are hindering Him and it’s leaving you discouraged.

**“Trust also in Him…”** Lean on Him. It was God that first wrote the words to the song, “Lean On Me.”

So if you feel like quitting your job, leaving your wife, taking to the road, dropping out of school, transferring your membership, emigrating to another country, or moving in to your bomb shelter, don’t! At least, not in discouragement! Hold it a minute and ask yourself the questions, “Have I allowed all these things to get on top of me so much that I have forgotten to trust the Lord?”<sup>3</sup>

God will act on your behalf, but not without your belief that He can and He will. He will intervene. The clouds of discouragement, the fog of discouragement, will begin to lift.

## VI. O—Opportunity

Use your discouragement as an opportunity for advancement. This may be God's opportunity of promoting you in disguise. Often we are discouraged because something we wanted to go a certain way didn't. From our perspective it failed.

Your adversity may be the doorway for advancement. God may be using your discouragement to prepare you for something special in your life. God has used some very discouraging situations in people's lives to do something awesome.

John Bunyan wrote "Pilgrim's Progress" while in jail for preaching the gospel. Fanny Crosby wrote "Blessed Assurance." She was blind.

Listen to the story of Thomas Edison:

Scientist and inventor, Thomas Edison, was sixty-seven years old and at the pinnacle of his career when his laboratory facility caught fire. Edison's son remembers shouting for his father as the fire raged out of control, not knowing if he was trapped inside. As he cried out he saw his father running toward him saying, "Son, go get your mother and bring her here. She'll never see another fire like this one as long as she lives." While the fire was burning, Edison leaned back on a table and fell asleep. The next day he called together all his employees and said, "We're starting over. This time we're going to make it better than before. We're going to build it from scratch and do it right." As he sifted through the ashes of his office, Edison found a picture of himself, frayed and charred around the edges but with the image still intact. Picking up the picture he turned to his son and said, "See, the fire never touched me. It never touched me."

## VII. U—Uncover

Uncover the reason you are discouraged. What is it that's got you down? Is it a habit you can't whip? Is it a person who has let you down or hurt you by something he said? Are you disappointed with God? Some are, but won't admit it. It may be that you are physically worn down or emotionally drained. Check your four gauges—physical, relational, emotional, and spiritual. Perhaps you feel far away from, distant from God. That can certainly discourage you. It did David.

### **Psalm 42:2,4 NASV**

*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?*

*[4] These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.*

Weeks, perhaps months had passed since he had worshipped with the people of God because of his circumstances.

It may be a sin that is unconfessed or a relationship that's broken. It may be the job, your boss, your marriage may not be all you had hoped. You need to diagnose the problem before you can specifically deal with it. If you don't know what it is, claim **James 1:5**. Ask God for wisdom.

### **James 1:5 NASV**

*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

## **VIII. R—Remove**

Remove that which is causing you to be discouraged. If it's sin or a wrong attitude repent and come clean. Start all over. Begin again. Remove a wrong spirit toward someone. Remove that guilt that's keeping you down. Quit praying for God to remove the cobwebs, get rid of the spider.

Remove that excess weight and food that's not good for you. Remove your feet from the recliner and get some exercise. Remove that stinking thinking and start being a positive, things can change kind of person. Remove the chains of past mistakes and sins. Remove those sin habits by putting them under the blood of Jesus Christ. Remove yourself from that negative influence.

The stone that was removed from the tomb on Easter Sunday stands as a reminder that your stone, whatever it is, can be removed too.

## IX. A—Abstain

Abstain from making life-changing decisions when you are discouraged. If not you will probably regret it later. Give God time to work. Timing is often an issue in discouragement.

Everyone enjoys immediate results. Whether it is a salesman making calls, a grandmother planting a garden, or a college graduate sending out resumes—no one enjoys waiting. Once we commit a situation to the Lord, we expect things to change— *now!* If we are convicted of a particular sin in our lives and turn to our heavenly Father for help, we want to experience instantaneous freedom. When we become burdened for someone and begin praying on that person's behalf, we expect God to do something soon. <sup>4</sup>

But often nothing happens. Our prayers go unanswered, and our effort goes unrewarded. It is during these times that we are most prone to get discouraged. Our confidence in the faithfulness of God wanes. We may even entertain doubts about His very existence.

For many people discouragement is the first stage in a multitude of emotionally crippling disorders. For others it serves as a catalyst for their theological pilgrimage—a pilgrimage that more often than not leads them to conclusions contrary to that of Scripture.

You can jump to wrong conclusions easily. Don't immediately take matters into your own hands. Impatience can lead to tremendous regret.

### God's Not in a Hurry!

A friend of a great preacher, Phillip Brooks, called on him and found him impatiently pacing the floor. His friend asked what the trouble was. Dr. Brooks exclaimed, "The trouble is that I am in a hurry, and God is not!" <sup>5</sup>

The Patience of Noah Don't give up. It took Noah six months to find a parking place.

## X. G—Glorify The Lord

Start praising the Lord. “Praise the Lord anyway.” Your circumstances may be sorry, but your God isn’t. He is worthy. Nothing lifts discouragement like praising the Lord. Part of delighting in the Lord is glorifying Him. It gets your mind off the circumstances and on Him.

### Isaiah 61:3 NASV

*To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

You have to deliberately put it on. It’s a choice to rejoice. Even if you don’t feel like it. When you don’t feel like putting your clothes on in the morning do you leave your house naked? “Don’t look Ethel, it’s a streaker!”

When Jehosophat praised the Lord, the victory came. When Paul and Silas praised the Lord in jail, the doors to freedom opened. Job did it, David did it, Habakkuk did it and **you** can do it.

Glorifying the Lord helps you to “trace the rainbow through the rain.”

## **XI. E—Encourage Others**

When you are discouraged, it's a great time to encourage others. When you begin to encourage others your spirit starts getting lifted. Whether you say it in person, call on the phone or write it in a note it will do you a world of good. Why? You stop thinking about you. You get beyond the walls of yourself.

### **2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NASV**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; [4] who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

### **You, Me and We**

John Berger, the principal, encountered a ninth-grade boy walking out of room 209 with a dour expression on his face. The concerned principal asked the boy, "And how are we today?"

The boy replied, "Awful. I don't understand all that stuff the math teacher wants us to learn—all those logarithms and postulates and stuff."

The principal said smoothly and comfortingly, "Well, I'm sure we can't find it all that bad, can we?"

The boy huffed back, "Well, sure we can say that! Because the you half of we doesn't have to learn that stuff all over again with the me half of we."

What you discover is, when you lose yourself in encouraging others, you lose your discouragement too.<sup>6</sup>

There is always someone who needs to be encouraged. Ask God to show you whom. Make a list. Contact each one with something that will encourage them. Your heavy heart will be lifted.

## **XII. D—Disciplines**

Don't ditch the disciplines of the Christian life. When you are discouraged the very things that can help you get through it and over come it are often the first things that get dumped. Why? Because you don't feel like doing it. David, in **Psalm 37**, is saying, "Hang in there."

When you are downcast—for whatever reason, minor or life shaking—it takes more effort to maintain the regular disciplines of the Christian life. Even getting out to church is an enormous struggle...and is it really worth-while...when you return home again to face your discouragement's? Is it too painful to you to hear that this is the only way to sustain yourself at your present level of discouragement and not sink into worse? When these basic disciplines go, everything is in danger of collapsing—as this psalmist discovered.<sup>7</sup>

Keep on praying. Keep on coming to worship. Keep on singing and praising the Lord. Keep on giving. Keep on reading and standing on God's Word.

Why should I feel discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely, And long for heaven and home, When Jesus is my portion: My constant Friend is He; His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me, His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me.

*Chorus:*

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free. For His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me.<sup>8</sup>

### **XIII. Endnotes**

- 1 **Illustration:** “Ministry on the Cutting Edge” – Ezell
- 2 **Quote:** “Healthy Habits for Spiritual Growth” – Palau
- 3 **Quote:** “What Works When Life Doesn’t” – Briscoe
- 4 **Quote:** “A Touch of His Freedom” – Stanley
- 5 **Illustration:** “1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking” – Hodgkin
- 6 **Quote:** “1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking” – Hodgkin
- 7 **Quote:** Deserted by God? – Ferguson
- 8 **Quote:** “Stories Behind Popular Songs and Hymns” – Terry