



Overcoming discouragement and building resilience

- Reasons we get discouraged:
 - The words or (in)actions of others: Job felt discouraged with his wife and friends;
 - Life's circumstances: Elijah after the miracles on Mount Carmel disappointed that Ahab and Jezebel did not repent (1 Kings 19)
 - With God: Jeremiah (Lamentations 3) and the disciples (Luke 24:21)
 - With ourselves: Peter (Matthew 26:31, 74 and 75)

- Impact of discouragement:
 - Leads to doubt and unbelief
 - Leads to selfishness
 - Leads to a weak watch against temptation
 - Leads to carelessness with our tongue
 - Leads to anger
 - Leads to giving up
 - Leads to becoming a discourager

- **5 steps to tackle discouragement & build resilience:**
 1. Be honest (be yourself, don't feel shame)
 - i. Find someone to talk to / engage your network
 2. Pay attention to your thought life (mindset/reframing)
 - i. Train yourself to 'see' life out of two lenses at the same time: the temporal and the eternal (practical tools and tactics)
 - ii. Choose your battles
 - iii. Reframe your perspective remember temporal vs eternal. All paths have bumps in them, learn to anticipate that these will occur and try to observe them objectively, dialling down the emotional response
 - iv. Allow time for negative thought but keep it limited
 - v. Write it all down
 3. Press close into God
 - i. **In everything give thanks for this is the will of God** (1 Thessalonian 5:18). Gratitude is a powerful anecdote for discouragement.

4. Take care of your body

Discussion questions:

- When have you become discouraged? What reasons resonate most for you (others, circumstances, God, yourself)?
- What tips do you have for your table on how to overcome discouragement?

On a lighter note...some encouragement - Famous setbacks

JK Rowling: Harry Potter was rejected by 12 publishers before being accepted by Bloomsbury: “It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all – in which case, you fail by default. Failure taught me things about myself that I could have learned no other way.”

Steve Jobs: Dropped out of college after six months, founded Apple but was then fired only to return 12 years later and lead it to global success.

Oprah Winfrey: endured a childhood of poverty and abuse, Oprah also suffered numerous setbacks in her early career. She was fired from her job as a reporter because her bosses said she was “unfit for TV,” lost her job as a news anchor and was demoted to morning TV but went on to become a hugely popular daytime TV host named by Life magazine as both the most influential woman and the most influential black person of her generation.

James Dyson: While developing his iconic vacuum cleaner, Dyson went through 5,126 failed prototypes – and his savings – and had to be partly supported by his wife’s salary as an art teacher. Dyson couldn’t sell his invention to the major manufacturers... so he set up his own manufacturing business instead.

Stephen Spielberg: The young Spielberg was rejected from the University of Southern California’s famous film school three times!

Bill Gates: He's been called "Harvard's most successful dropout" after leaving the prestigious university to set up a business which created reports for roadway engineers based on traffic data. It folded several years later, but Bill Gates and his partner Paul Allen used the business lessons they'd learned when they set up Microsoft. "Success is a lousy teacher," he once said about failure. "It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose."

Richard Branson: Branson left school at 16, his headmaster having told him that he would either end up in prison or a millionaire. "Over the years, my team and I have not let mistakes, failures or mishaps get us down," says Branson. "Instead, even when a venture has failed, we try to look for opportunities, to see whether we can capitalise on another gap in the market."

Walt Disney: The young Walt Disney was fired from an early job on a newspaper because they said he wasn't creative enough (he "lacked imagination and had no good ideas"). When he founded his first animation company in 1920, it went broke in a year, and Disney was reportedly so poor that he couldn't pay his rent and survived by eating dog food. When he tried to get MGM studios to distribute Mickey Mouse in 1927, he was told that the idea would never work because a giant mouse on the screen would terrify women.

Practice reframing:

Reframing your MINDSET

When faced with a difficult moment or feeling, it can be easy to focus only on the negative. Reframing involves looking at challenges from a different perspective to try to find the opportunity or lessons that might exist.

To reframe negative thoughts or a difficult situation, take a minute and ask yourself, "How can I think about this differently?" If it helps, say or write down whatever thoughts come to mind.

I'M FEELING OVERWHELMED

I'M WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING AT WORK

OVERTHINKING IS MAKING ME FEEL ANXIOUS

I'VE BEEN FEELING LONELY

I'M HAVING TROUBLE WITH SOMEONE IN MY LIFE

I'VE BEEN LEANING ON UNHEALTHY HABITS

It's ok to feel this way – this shows I care about my family/my work/my performance/my community....

This could be an opportunity to try something new

It's good that I've noticed there's a problem. Now I can do something about it.

All relationships have their ups and downs. This might bring us closer together.

Sources and further reading:

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/dont-let-discouragement-choke-you>
- <https://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/association-of-biblical-counselors/5-ways-to-stop-discouragement-from-getting-the-best-of-you.html>