

Discouraged by the Present? Dream About the Future

Introduction

1. We are living in a time that is discouraging and depressing for many people.
 - a. As a society we are dealing with an economic recession, the loss of jobs and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
 - b. Individually we may be dealing with personal tragedies such as economic reversals, disease, problems that accompany aging or some other family crisis.
2. There is usually little comfort when you are really depressed and discouraged.
 - a. Normally, we try to keep from being depressed.
 - b. Discouragements and depression come into all of our lives at one time or another.
3. In reality, there are times when we ought to be discouraged as well as depressed.
 - a. Jeremiah challenged the false prophets because they prophesied “peace, peace” when there was none and became known as the weeping prophet. (Jeremiah 6:14)
 - b. Our Lord wept openly over the state of His people. (Matthew 23:37)
4. In relation to spiritual matters today, there are some things that are discouraging and depressing.

I. Some Discouraging Things Today

- A. Fussing and fighting brethren. (John 13:34-35; Galatians 5:13-16)
 1. Did the Lord come to die in order to:
 - a. Make His people a **self-righteous, intolerant, proud, aggressive and impatient people?**
 - b. Breed a **spirit of contention, strife and jealousy?**
 2. Yet, such is seen in far too many who claim to be God’s people.
 - a. Some are more critical than any people I know and not half as nice.
 - b. I quit subscribing to brotherhood periodicals several years ago for this very reason.
 - 1) They seldom see any good in anything or anyone.
 - 2) It is discouraging to me that they spend so much time looking for the “wrong” that they are seldom able to see a right?
- B. I am discouraged over a lack of joy, life and humor among those who claim to be Christians.

1. The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing when Christ was made the center of his life. (Acts 8:39)
 - a. Why are there those who seem not to be happy as Christians?
 - 1) There is no joy in the hearts of too many individuals.
 - 2) They look upon Christianity as a duty they must discharge but which makes them miserable.
 - b. To such people, assemblies are cold, indifferent and a drudgery through which they have to suffer.
 - These come in as late as possible, sit as close to the back door as possible, sing as slowly as possible, go to sleep as soon as possible and leave as fast as possible.
 - c. Christianity has become nothing more than some kind of auditing procedure.
 - 1) How many young people have grown up in homes where they saw this attitude all too clearly?
 - 2) How many weak Christians have lost their faith when they saw this attitude in those who should have been showing real zeal and fervor and a genuine love for the Lord?
 - 3) Have you ever stopped to wonder how many people have been repelled by this brand of Christianity?
2. Christ prayed that His disciples might have His full measure of joy in them. (John 17:13)
3. David, despite adversity, praised God in worship with joy and gladness in his heart.
4. The NT Christians, even in the face of persecution, were joyful people.
- C. I am discouraged by brethren who have missed the point of life and the whole point of Christianity.
 1. Stop and ask yourself, "What have I done with my life?" "What spiritual achievements have been acquired in the last 5, 10 and/or 20 years?"
 - a. One family in 20 years remodeled their house and lost their children.
 - b. One family came to services every Sunday but could not admit doing anything else.
 - c. Many who claim to be Christians have spent their lives in the pursuit of every other kind of goal in the world other than Spiritual goals.
 2. The point of Christianity? To save yourself by serving the Lord and others.
 - a. Many feel they are to be served and if not they complain.
 - b. They demand satisfaction—never think of others first.
 - c. To some, Christianity is nothing more than a game, hobby and/or an intellectual exercise.

II. Why Go On?

- A. Some might ask, "If you see such negative attitudes among those who claim to be God's people, why go on?"
 - 1. "Why go on if there are those who do not appreciate their blessings as children of God and will not conform their lives to God's will?"
 - 2. "Why bother trying to do good when it seems to have little effect?"
- B. As discouraging and depressing as these things are, the majority of those who are the people of God are good, honest and devoted people.
 - 1. When I get discouraged over those who are not what they should be, I realize that it is my responsibility to influence them to be and do better.
 - 2. When I get discouraged about the present, I dream about the future and what I see this church rising to be.

III. My Dream for This Church

- A. A church that is into the word.
 - 1. Colossians 3:16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
 - 2. My heart is touched by people who:
 - a. Thrill to and cleave to the truth.
 - b. Are concerned about Bible classes and emphasize knowledge, understanding and application of the word of God.
- B. A church that is positive.
 - 1. The 12 spies pessimistically viewed the land of promise because they failed to trust God. (Numbers 13)
 - 2. David was able to be victorious over Goliath for he knew the Lord was with him. (1 Samuel 17:37, 45-47)
 - 3. We cannot allow pessimism to kill our faith.
 - a. Negativism chains us to the "status quo" and keeps us from growing.
 - b. We must influence negative people to realize the joy they should be experiencing because of all the blessings they have in Christ.
- C. A church that is unified.
 - 1. Division has always been a curse to God's people.
 - a. Truth does cause division but that is division between the world and the church.
 - b. In the brotherhood, in our age there has been little division caused by standing for the truth but far too much caused by ego, strife, opinion and jealousy.

2. Division has never been pleasing to God although some brethren seem to think that it is.
 - a. Paul rebuked the church in Corinth for it.
 - b. We are one body and we are not to have discord or division in that body. (1 Corinthians 12:25)
 3. Unity, love for one another, is our testimony to the world that we are of Christ. (John 13:34-35)
- D. A church that believes in prayer.
1. The church in the NT was a praying church.
 - a. It seems that every time you turn the page in the book of Acts they were gathering for a time of prayer.
 - b. They prayed jail doors off their hinges and emperors off the throne.
 2. Wednesday night used to be called “prayer meeting” but now in too many churches, little of it is done.
 3. Someone has said that the worst sin among brethren may be a lack of prayer for such demonstrates that we feel we do not need God to care for us in our daily lives.
- E. A church that is evangelistic.
1. Since the Lord came to seek and save the lost, how can I call myself after His name and not be what He was?
 2. Why do we not win more souls?
 - a. We do not come in contact with a sinner up close—almost all our approaches to those outside of Christ are impersonal.
 - b. We must see the need to personally reach out to others.

Conclusion

1. Is this an “impossible dream?”
 - a. No. For the Lord has told me and showed me it can be done.
 - b. It is within the grasp of every Christian in every local church.
2. Where does the dream begin?
 - a. With me.
 - b. With a commitment to my Lord that I will set the example and I will not be deterred.
3. Will you join me in the dream? Will you join the Lord and His people?
4. The ultimate goal is heaven. It awaits all those who dream and will submit to Him and His gospel to make that dream come true.