

## Equipped to dispel discouragement

Discouragement defeats. Discouragement paralyzes. Discouragement makes us ask “Why bother?” Discouragement is one of the most destructive forces in the Christian life. Are you feeling discouraged right now? Perhaps things have not worked out as you had hoped in your church or ministry. Or perhaps your job is just getting on top of you. You want to live for Christ in the workplace but it’s a struggle just to keep going. Perhaps you’ve been praying for someone for years and the situation has got worse rather than better. You wonder “What’s the point of praying?” You’re discouraged. The experience of two of Jesus’ followers may equip you to dispel discouragement.

**1. Discouragement is common.** Two friends of Jesus went for a walk one Sunday afternoon to a place called Emmaus. It was seven long, heavy, weary miles from Jerusalem on that first Easter Sunday. They talked. Talking sometimes helps lift the burden of discouragement. Sometimes it makes things worse. In this case, the more they talked the more discouraged they became. They had placed all their hopes for the future in Jesus but now He was dead. The future seemed hopeless. They were deeply discouraged.

**2. Discouragement has consequences.** As if it’s not bad enough to feel discouraged, discouragement has other negative effects. As well as making us feel like giving up, it can make us blind to the obvious. These two people didn’t recognise Jesus when He joined them. Our discouragement can prevent us from experiencing the presence of Christ. Sometimes it can blind us to obvious evidence that He is at work. Are you missing clear evidence that He is at work in your life, family or church, simply because you’re discouraged?

**3. Discouragement has causes.** In the case of these two individuals, it was caused by dashed hopes. In your case it might be something different. But wait a minute! Could it be that your discouragement is because you’re not seeing things clearly? They were discouraged because their hopes were dashed. They thought Jesus was dead. Yet, they had clear evidence that He was not dead, but alive. They had the clear testimony of some women who had found the tomb empty and reported a vision of angels who told them Jesus was alive. But they refused to believe it. Some of the disciples of Jesus also found the tomb empty. But they refused to believe it. The Old Testament prophets had said that Jesus would rise again. But they refused to believe it. In the case of these two people, the cause of their discouragement was their own refusal to believe. Let’s not be too hard on them. Let’s ask ourselves the question: “Am I discouraged because of my own refusal to believe something in God’s word?”

**4. Discouragement has a cure.** These two people on the Emmaus road were transformed by the power of God’s word, taught them by the risen Christ. And when the job was done, they recognised Him and He disappeared! We will not encounter Jesus in the way they did, physically, but the cure for our discouragement is the same as the cure for theirs was - a fresh and powerful encounter with the risen Christ through his Word. When discouraged, we are often reluctant to open our bibles. Perhaps we think there’s no point. But that’s exactly what our enemy, the devil, wants. He knows that as long as he can keep us away from the bible, he can keep us in a state of discouragement and defeat. The cure is to make the effort to get out of that chair you’re sitting in, heavy hearted, get your bible off the shelf or out of the drawer and read Luke 24:13-34, the passage I’ve just been referring to. But before you read, ask Christ to reveal Himself to you. Maybe, just maybe, as you read, the cloud of discouragement will lift, and you may be able to move forward again in your Christian life. Discouragement will have been dispelled.