

# How to Stay Encouraged

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of staying encouraged through prayer, obedience, and community support in the face of discouragement.*

**Duration:** 23:22

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 15:7, Matthew 18:20, Acts 3:19, Acts 15:32, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 Timothy 2:8, James 4:8, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Encouragement", "Prayer Life"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the impact of discouragement and the importance of staying encouraged in the Lord. It highlights how discouragement can lead to sin and relapse, but God offers continuous opportunities for renewal and encouragement through prayer, obedience, and seeking spirit-filled believers. The message stresses the need to align with God's truth, seek encouragement through prayer, and prioritize prayer as the foundation of our lives and ministries.

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## Transcript

Discouragement can come in because not only I believe we can beat ourselves up but the enemy can plant thoughts of doubt and discouragement and the reason, the purpose for discouragement I've said before but bears repeating is God wants us to walk this direction, discouragement comes in and causes us to do what? I'll head for that door, not that door, I'm discouraged. This door is the easy route and discouragement knocks us off track so Barnabas came and he encouraged the people what? With purpose of heart, purpose of heart that they should continue with the Lord. One of the best principles of the Christian faith that you will ever learn is to continue with the Lord regardless of circumstances, regardless of setbacks, regardless of how your life is going, you continue regardless.

And often God will allow us to be tested in this area because isn't it easy, you just got promoted at work, you got thousands back on your taxes, everything's going great, no cars are breaking down, the house is going good, the children have the house clean and they're dressed, they're ready for church, you're filled with the Spirit of God, things are going great, it's not too hard to stay on that track. But when the opposite occurs and the thoughts of doubt and discouragement come in, that's when it's hard to stay on track. But Barnabas encouraged them and then the Bible said something very interesting, this would be a great Father's Day message if it was Father's Day, for he was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith.

And men you will never be a good man, I will never be a good man unless we are filled with the Spirit. Because here's how it works, we're filled with the Spirit or we're filled with the world or we're in between fighting. I like this side but I know I need this side and this side, actually when you're in the middle you're miserable.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. So a good man is a man full of the Holy Spirit and as much as I would like to talk about that I have for the last few months. So go back and listen to those messages, full of the Holy Spirit and the faith, he was a good man.

So we have this image of Barnabas, he's an encourager, he's encouraging people. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Any time you get somebody filled with the Holy Spirit you will see the church being built up.

People coming to know the Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit. When they're not filled with the Holy Spirit you rarely see things happening for the Kingdom of God, that's just truth. It's frustrating but it happens when we're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

Here's why. Shane's got his agenda, right? I'm going shopping to get groceries, I've got to be here, I've got to be here, my phone's not working, I've got to go to Verizon, this is it. I've got my agenda, God don't get in the way.

Nothing happens. But when you wake up and start the day with prayer and say, God how can you use me on my job? How can you use me at the Verizon store, at the restaurant, or at, how can you use me Lord? What do you want to do? What do you want to do? I want to be full of your Spirit. Because we think Sunday's the Super Bowl.

Really Sunday is just so we come together and we get encouraged and we go back out and we do the work of God. The work of God happens out there. Think about that.

That's where it happens. If it's just me, but do you see all those tents now out in the desert from the freeway? You think anybody should be reaching out and inviting to church or giving them a ride or we're ashamed they all are alcoholics or they all deserve it? Not everybody. Not everybody.

Be careful. Because that heart of compassion and empathy can turn into a hard, cold, callous heart. And I also know that we don't want to enable.

But I want to develop that heart of compassion. I don't know about you, but that's hard to come by as well. So the three cautions.

The first one here reminds us that we need to stay encouraged. Stay encouraged. Encouraged means a persuasion to do something or to continue in something.

That's actually why we are here. So the first caution is the Bible will tell you to stay encouraged in the Lord. Stay.

Plant your feet and do things that build up your encouragement. Anytime you see somebody fall away from the Lord or marriage that's on the rocks or adultery or you name it, guess what happened to their encouragement? It went bye-bye. It was gone because they were no longer encouraged.

And in our discouragement, that's when we sin. Oh, forget it then. I'm so discouraged.

Fights at home. Fights at home. Hard, difficult things put an addict back into their addictions often.

You ever heard the word relapse? Do you think that happens when everything's going good? I'm so encouraged. I'm moving forward with God. He's doing so many things in my life.

Then comes the discouragement. Then they go back and they relapse and they fall back into that discouragement, back into that shame and guilt. And the enemy wants to keep us in that pattern of shame and guilt.

Shame and guilt discouraged. Shame and guilt discouraged. Let me encourage you briefly here, not in my sermon notes, but I think we need to hear this, is a lot of that can change this morning.

One of the wonderful things I love about God, you hear me say it often, is He is a God of not the second chances. Sometimes they say, God, you are the God of second chances. Second chances? Can you add a few thousand up there? It's until the day you breathe your last breath, God is saying, come back, reposition, get encouraged again, come back to me, seek me and you will finally draw near to me.

And I will draw near to you right now. Reposition your life, get reorganized, get reemphasized, emphasize me in prayer and fasting and humility and worship. Get back on track, get back on track so it can end that quickly.

Now the discouragement sometimes doesn't end and I'm full of encouragement. Sometimes it's a step-by-step process. But God never lets us down.

God never says, you know what, Shane, I'm so discouraged, I'll listen to your prayers maybe around June or July. You get your life straight, you stop doing that, you stop doing that and I'll listen to you in a month or two. Think about how powerful, just think about this for a minute.

We get caught in the shame and the guilt and the discouragement, God says, come back, no. We beat ourselves up. We want to somehow stay in this cesspool, really, of shame and guilt.

Well here's a few ways I want to help encourage you, it helps me a lot. When you look at a situation, ask this question, what does God say about it? What does God say about my situation? Whatever you're discouraged in right now, marriage, things at work, children, whatever it is, what does God say, not what do people say? Raising your kids, you ever get discouraged? Huh? I mean, we could get in a big debate right now, homeschool, private school, public school. I mean, that's right up there talking about vaccines, but Lord, I'm so discouraged, what do I do? What does God say? Not the world.

What does God say? Well, I don't know what he says, that's what this is for. That's why I say you should spend a lot, learn this, Genesis to Revelation, and then what changed? And then you start again, and then what? You start again, and you have the whole counsel of God. What does God say? I mean, you'll amount to nothing, you can't do that, you've given up your whole career, that's a stupid choice.

Yes, it is, according to the world. That's why most of Hollywood is depressed and on Xanax, and Vicodin, and Oxy, and they might buy something to snort and then drink something, why? It's not fulfilling, the world is never fulfilling. It promises everything, but delivers nothing.

So to be encouraged, look at what God says. So when I get discouraged, I just turn to Psalms. Just grab the Psalm and just stay there, camp out, oh my goodness, after 30 minutes you are encouraged.

Sometimes you have to fight those struggles in your mind, sometimes it doesn't happen, and I don't feel like reading, and I don't feel like praying, I'll just make a confession out there, I love when a confession starts here, right? It hopefully flows down. But guess who didn't want to go to prayer this morning? Phil, Jack, I just hate to tell you guys this. I walked in there like, oh man, I'm rushed, I got up an hour and a half late, I even went through my sermon, my phone's not working.

Verizon, later today, yes, that's what that means. I can't even pray, Lord, but by the time we left, oh, let me tell you, by the time we left, God, the Spirit of God, I'm so encouraged. I'm driving home thinking, I don't even need a phone.

Who needs a phone? I don't care, and you have to encourage yourself. I mean, they are overrated, are they not? They control us. I get back to the flip time, the kind you have to text like this, four times to make one letter, you'll never text again.

I've disconnected Facebook and my email alerts on my phone, it's been the most relaxing two weeks I've had, and I'm not joking. Don't feel offended, right? Because it controls us. Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, and discouragement.

So what does God say? Encourage yourself, get into prayer. Every morning, Sunday morning at 7.30 and Tuesday nights at 7, you will not feel like it. Every excuse in the book will come up.

Have you ever, I'm hungry, I've got stuff to do, I'm tired, I don't feel like it. And this one, you've got to drag your feelings with you and be here for prayer. Yes, I'm promoting it, I make no apologies.

But I think when we get the church praying, the church encourages herself. Also, this is huge, I would have to say it's right up there with wisdom. To stay encouraged, if you want to stay encouraged and if something is discouraging you, right, that's the opposite of encouragement, what do spirit-filled believers say? And the reason I say spirit-filled believers, Bible-believing, you can have Bible-believing, you can know Bible-believing people and you don't want to go for them to advise.

They're just as rigid and mean as the junkyard dog, right, remember that song? They're just so mean and I don't want to, you don't want to go to them. You want to go to spirit-filled believers who love the Lord, who will speak into your life. And what you want to do is this, listen, listen.

Because they see things from different angles that we don't see. And sometimes we don't want to go to them because we don't want to know what they want to hear, right? I'm doing my thing, so one way God uses people, spirit-filled people, is to encourage us. Then the final thing I already talked about, a way to encourage yourself is prayer.

Prayer encourages and strengthens. Here's what happens in prayer, it happened this morning. You see the light at the end of the tunnel.

You see the light breaking forth. And I don't know how it works, but the mind, I believe, is the most powerful thing on the planet. Without anything, because before you do this and sin, or walk in sin, it's here.

The battle's here, it's the most powerful thing ever developed, ever created by God. So what prayer does is it actually changes your thoughts. You're not conformed anymore into the world's image.

You're bringing your thoughts back into captive. You're taking your thoughts captive. And I should remind us, this is a good time to remind us, that Jesus said, My house will be called a house of prayer.

My house will be called a house of prayer. And I might step on toes here, but that's okay. Even preaching must bow to prayer.

Even worship must bow to prayer. Even ministry, involved in ministry, it must bow to prayer. What I mean by that is prayer is focal point.

Prayer is the foundation. Prayer is everything. Prayer is actually here, and everything else is built upon it.

Everything, everything must bow to prayer as being the primary thing. Here's why. I've seen a lot of churches, boy, they can worship, but they got drunk last night.

Oh, you want me to keep going? You can come up here and preach, and a person hasn't prayed. And it's just clanging cymbals and noise. People, that's why they fall asleep in many churches.

If you get a pastor on fire with God, filled with the Spirit of God, it's rising up in him. He's a man of prayer, and he has to say something. People cannot fall asleep.

They are changed. They are challenged in everything. And if you go out and start a ministry without prayer, I guarantee that ministry won't last more than a few months.

You might get six months. You might, oh, grin and bear it. Here we go.

I'm barely seeing this thing through because it's not bathed in clothed in prayer. I found this out. When I get something burdened on my heart, and God has some things burdened on my heart right now I'm praying for, I can't tell you right now, and it's such a burden that it begins to change even how I think and how I act, how I treat others.

And I'm encouraged by what God is putting on my heart. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. As tempted as I am, I know not everybody's ready for this, but I just turn a service sometimes into a prayer and worship service.

Because that's our warfare. The weapons of our warfare. We walk in the flesh.

We do not war according to the flesh. Here's what happens. Pulling down strongholds.

A stronghold is when something gets in our lives, and it's in many of our lives, it comes in and it's a stronghold. Why can't I get rid of this? It's got such a stronghold on me. I bring it to the cross every week, and I can't seem to stop this.

It's got a stronghold. That's not just going to come out with a quick little prayer and choosing Deadpool over Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It's not.

It's a stronghold. If you don't know what that is, that's good. Don't worry.

It's a deplorable movie that many Christians watch, and they wonder why they're not filled with the Spirit of God. That's what it does. Casting down arguments.

You know what an argument? Here's what prayer does. The excuse maker's right here. But when I'm praying, not five minutes, ten minutes, when I'm praying, that excuse maker has to go hide.

Casting down arguments. And every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, everything that's coming into my mind that's exalting itself against God, that's making excuses in a stronghold, they all have to flee. When true prayer, true prayer enters your heart, you will be encouraged.

Now, I do need to throw this out there, but encouragement doesn't mean, tell me what I want to hear. Because most people think, well, Shane, you're not very encouraging. You haven't heard that before? Shane, you're not very encouraging.

Oh, if you mean I'm not encouraging you in your sin, you're absolutely right. Because that's not encouragement. So encouragement, now it does, it means encouraging those who have fallen.

My wife will tell you, we laugh at this all the time. People go, oh, Shane, he's, watch how he talks to an individual. He's too sappy sometimes.

No, come on, come on, give him a hard, no, but on individual conversations, building them up, encouraging them, getting out of that addiction and that lifestyle and encouraging them. But when it comes to preaching, it's a lot different, because there's more people watching out there than in here sometimes, and God wants to speak to people in different ways, and it's not always encouraging. I couldn't even get out of 2 Chronicles 15, 16, 17, 18 this week.

I just kept turning back to it. So many things came out from that. But one of the things was, Jehoshaphat was a good king.

You had Saul, you had David, you had Solomon, and then the kingdoms broke up. Northern kingdom, and then the southern kingdom of Judah. Jehoshaphat was a good king.

He made some mistakes. He trusted in God, and then God delivered him from the Egyptians, but then he had trusted in an army, and God said, why have you trusted in them and not me and the Syrians judged him? He's an interesting character. He reminds me of me, right? I'll trust in God, but in this situation, I'll trust in myself.

Jehoshaphat, he comes, and King Ahab, he married into Ahab's lineage, I think through Jehoshaphat's wife, related to Ahab, and Ahab said, I need you. If you don't know who Ahab is, just think of Jezebel. Ahab was a very wicked king in northern Israel, Jehoshaphat in southern Judah, and Ahab said, would you align with me? Would you align with me? We're going into battle.

And Jehoshaphat said, well, what do the prophets say? What do the seers say? The seer, S-E-E-R, is what the Old Testament used for a prophet who could see what God is going to do, and they would go back and instruct the king if they were truly seeking God. So it's interesting. Jehoshaphat and Ahab were sitting before the prophets, and all these prophets were saying, go into battle, king, you're going to win.

You're the man. You're going to take down Syria. You're the man, Ahab.

Just cheering them up and encouraging, encouraging this wicked king. They were encouraging him. And Jehoshaphat said, isn't there not one other prophet? And Ahab goes, yeah, but this guy, Micaiah, he always speaks evil about me.

I don't like this guy. He hates me. And Ahab's people, I guess you could say his entourage, went and found Micaiah and they said, listen, the king wants you to speak to him, but please, just be an encouragement like all the other prophets.

Please. Would you just encourage him? Can you imagine this picture? Please, please, come on. And here's what he said.

And Micaiah said, as the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak. And it was not encouraging. He told the king, because you're wicked, you've not repented of your sin, you will die when you go to battle.

And he said, lock this man up. I'll deal with him when I get back. And he said, if you come back, then the Lord has not spoken to me.

Tell me encouraging things. Tell me encouraging things. But we also have to remember that encouragement is found in obedience.

I have a big dry erase board that I've got prayer requests on. I need encouraging verses just like anybody else. And this one I just kept turning back to every morning.

But God's speaking here. He says, but you, and this could be applied to us, but you, be strong, and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. Isn't that encouraging? See, when I'm discouraged, and I feel like I'm not going in the right direction, God just says this, be strong.

Do not let your hands be weak. What does that mean? You have something. You're holding it.

Don't do this. I'm giving up. Don't let your hands be weak.

You will be rewarded. We think change, that's selfish. No, it doesn't mean like I got bling bling, rewarded.

It means rewarded. God's gonna see the prayer through. He's gonna guard your children, guard your marriage.

He's gonna take away that depression, that anxiety, all these things, and he's going to rebuild your life. But it requires obedience. I've never seen a person very encouraged in the Lord who was disobedient.

Have you? Talk to me afterwards. I'd love to meet this person. They are so disobedient, but they are encouraged in the Lord.

It doesn't work that way. Actually, the most miserable people you will ever meet is those who are doing something they know they shouldn't be doing. They're very discouraged.

So what steps can you take today to stay encouraged? Everything I just talked about the last 15 minutes, what can you apply this morning to stay encouraged? You know, I just, I want to throw this out there too. I don't know, some of you I don't recognize. I don't know who's, we've got a lot of people watching online now, on livestream.

And maybe you've been very discouraged. Maybe you don't have answers in life. And it could be that you don't have a relationship with God.

You don't know who Jesus Christ is. The Bible is very clear. It just says, repent of your sin and believe that He is who God said He is.

He's the Son of God. Repent and believe. And times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 3.19. Just repent and believe. And times of refreshing. That word refreshing is a Greek word.

It's about revival. God reviving, refreshing. Have you ever seen a dead plant or dead grass and after some water? It's alive and refreshed and revived.

That's how you get encouraged again. It's repentance and renewal.

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