

Monsoon- Part 2 Downing Discouragement

Intro:

Recap monsoon and last week

Last week we began a series called monsoon. Monsoon is a season we experience when our desert heat causes winds to shift drawing moisture up from the gulfs of California and Mexico. The heat, wind and moisture create an environment where storms are common, sometimes sudden and destructive. And in this monsoon series, we are comparing components of a monsoon storm to the storms we experience in living life. Last week we talked about wind and fear. We said faith destroys the power of fear and looked at several ways to battle fear in our storms.

This morning, I'd like to look at another component of our monsoon season. And that component is humidity. Actually, it is heat and humidity. If you were outside this week, you felt the effects of heat and humidity. One amazing thing about the body is its ability to regulate its own temperature. When we sweat, the heat from our body creates energy for sweat to vaporize and evaporate. That loss of heat cools our body. However, when it is humid outside, the air doesn't need more moisture, so evaporation doesn't occur as well, which in turn doesn't cool the body. So, in these times of humid conditions, we find our environment nasty. It's muggy; your clothes stick to you because the sweat ain't evaporating. Being outside sucks the life out of you. It's draining. It's unmotivating. In extreme circumstances, heat and humidity is deadly.

Transition to this week:

But in the everyday walk of life, there is something just as powerful as heat and humidity. It's draining, it's unmotivating, it will suck the life right out of you- physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. And in extreme circumstances, it can have far-reaching effects. It's discouragement. Like the monsoon season brings hot and muggy weather that wears us down, so discouragement wears us down in the face of our storms.

This morning, I'd like us to consider where discouragement comes from, how it affects us and what we can do about it.

What do I mean by discouragement?

Before we jump into where discouragement comes from, let me tell you what I mean by discouragement. Discouragement has the idea of lacking or a reduce sense of courage or hope, or being dishearten. And everyone experiences discouragement. Discouragement is generally temporary, but long-term discouragement can lead to things like depression and anxiety.

So, where does ►discouragement come from?

1. Discouragement comes from...

Generally speaking, discouragement comes from our circumstances. Something has happened- a storm has formed- and we lose the courage we once had. But there are some specific circumstances we face regularly that can lead to discouragement.

a. ►Fear

- i. We talked about fear last week, so I am not going talk much about it this week, except to say that fear oftentimes leads to discouragement. When fear grips us, we lose heart or courage for what we need or want to do.

- ii. Joshua in the Bible makes this connection too. ► ^{NLT} **Joshua 1:9** This is my command -- be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
- b. Defeat
 - i. Another thing that leads to ► discouragement is defeat. Oftentimes, losing sucks the courage right out of us.
 - ii. I remember the defeat I felt when I was looking for a job. With every "no" came greater discouragement. My heart seemed to sink deeper after every rejection letter.
 - iii. This happened in the Bible too. One of David's commanders had lost several men in a battle. And David sent him this message. ► ^{NLT} **2 Samuel 11:25** "Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged," David said. "The sword devours this one today and that one tomorrow! Fight harder next time, and conquer the city!"
- c. Overwhelming obstacles
 - i. Another discouraging circumstance is ► some kind of overwhelming obstacle. Have you ever been so overwhelmed by a looming obstacle that you found yourself discouraged?
 - ii. I can still feel the discouragement of mounting finances that seemed overwhelming. I've talked to friends who are discouraged by the bigness of mending a relationship.
 - iii. This happened in the Bible as well. Seventy years after Jerusalem had been destroyed, God allowed some Jews to return and begin rebuilding. Things went well for a couple of weeks when discouragement set in. ► ^{NLT} **Nehemiah 4:10** Then the people of Judah began to complain, "The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves."
- d. Other people-
 - i. And finally, we can be ► discouraged by other people. Have you ever noticed that discouragement can be contagious? And frankly, there are some people its hard to be around. They are never encouraging; they are in a constant state of discouragement.
 - ii. Several years ago, I made a decision to not hang around with someone who constantly discouraged me. Their attitude, and behavior and tone were discouraging all the time.
 - iii. And sometimes there is a fine line between encouraging the discouraged and needing to find new people to hang out with.
 - iv. The Bible is full of examples of people being discouraged by other people.
 - v. Fathers and probably mothers have the ability to discourage their kids. ► ^{NLT} **Colossians 3:21** Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.
 - vi. Parents, you have the ability to suck the courage right out of them. They can be disheartened by their interaction with you.
 - vii. In the Old Testament, the Jews were getting ready to enter the land God had promised them. So, they sent a reconnaissance team to check things out. ► ^{NLT} **Numbers 32:9** After they went up to the valley of Eshcol and explored the land,

they discouraged the people of Israel from entering the land the LORD was giving them.

So , there are some these that discourage us.

2. Discouragement results in...

►As I look through the Bible and experience my own storms, there seem to be at least 3 things that can happen when we are discouraged.

a. ►Can't act

- i. This seems to make sense. When we lack courage and are drained by discouragement, our desire, motivation, will and ability to act is affected.
- ii. Have you ever stopped doing something because you got so discouraged? I am guessing we all have at some point.
- iii. Mike was a student in my youth group, and Mike really struggled in school. His parents harped about his grades and he always seemed to be grounded. Mike was discouraged by school. He felt defeated and the idea of actually bringing up his grades was so overwhelming. And his discouragement eventually led to his dropping out of school.
- iv. Ever been so discouraged by the rejection letters while looking for work, that it was difficult to continue? Sometimes discouragement can keep us from acting.
- v. This same things happens in the Bible. After the spies can back with the bad report about the Promised Land, the Jews said, no, we don't want to go. In fact, look at their response. ►^{NLT} **Numbers 14:2** Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. ►³ "Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? ... Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" ►⁴ Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!" They just gave up! They were so discouraged by what they heard, they gave up.

b. ►Can't listen

- i. When we have had the life sucked out of us; when we are drained and discouraged, when hope seems hopeless, we stop listening.
- ii. People try to encourage us, but we can't listen. God might try to speak to us, but we don't listen. I can remember times in my marriage when Jen and I have been so discouraged- mostly with each other- that we stopped listening. I can remember being so discouraged at our finances that I didn't hear God telling me to trust him.
- iii. This happens in the Bible too. ►^{NLT} **Exodus 6:9** So Moses told the people of Israel what the LORD had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery.

c. ►Vulnerable to attack

- i. Finally, discouragement makes us vulnerable to attacks. When we are discouraged- lack courage or faith- when we are disheartened, we are open to attacks. Our guard is down. The same way extended heat and humidity wears us down physically, so does discouragement. It opens us up to attacks by Satan or sin.

- ii. Have you ever been so discouraged you fell back into bad habits? Does it seem like times of discouragement lead to one failure after another? Sure, because discouragement leaves us open to attack.
- iii. Like the others, this happened in the Bible too. ► ^{NLT} **2 Samuel 17:2** I will catch up with him while he is weary and discouraged. He and his troops will panic, and everyone will run away...

So, there are some things that cause discouragement and the results of discouragement. ► So, what do we do then to bring down discouragement?

3. Ways to fight discouragement...

For the next few minutes, I'd like to look at 4 ways to help with discouragement in storms.

a. ► Pour (Prayer)

- i. In 1 Samuel, we have the story of Hannah, Samuels's mom. Hannah couldn't have children and it troubled her soul. On one occasion, she and her husband are at the temple and she begins to pour out her heart to God.
- ii. Let's look at ► ^{NLT} **1 Samuel 1:15b** But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the LORD.
- iii. You can look through the Psalms and see a number of times where people have poured out their heart out to God.
- iv. For those of us less emotional, pouring our heart out to God seems awkward. Mostly because "pouring our heart" sounds more descriptive than just prayer. And it is. Because a discouraged heart is a hurting heart. And the question is, "can we give that pain to God?" Do our prayers reflect our hurt and discouragement?
- v. It's ok to trust God with that pain and discouragement. It doesn't make us bad Christians for being discouraged.

b. Praise

- i. There is second thing to do when we find ourselves discouraged in a storm. ► Praise.
- ii. ^{NLT} **Psalm 42:5** Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again...
- iii. This exact verse appears 3 times in Psalm 42 and 43.
- iv. Praising when we're discouraged isn't always easy. Praising God in the midst of a storm isn't easy either. I used to think that praising God in storms and discouragement somehow meant I had to be ok with what was going on. But that's not true. In this Psalm the same writer who is praising in discouragement is asking ► ⁹ "... "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?" Praise doesn't mean we aren't struggling; it's not like saying, "Thanks God. This is great." Praise is simply saying "You God are great."
- v. ► There are lots of storms brewing in our MVBC family. Several families are struggling with health issues and financial issues and relational issues. More than I can recall at one time. And yet, I am so encouraged by many who seem to be praising God in spite of their circumstances. It is possible to praise in discouragement.

c. People

- i. A third way to fight ► discouragement is with people. We said earlier that people can be a cause for discouragement. But they can also be a source of encouragement. And I think that's one of the greatest challenges we have as Christians: how to be an encouragement instead of a discouragement. How to show empathy and not exhibit empathy deficit disorder.
 - ii. Maybe it's an "I'm praying for you!"
 - iii. Maybe it's a smile. ► ^{NLT} **Job 29:24** When they were discouraged, I smiled at them. My look of approval was precious to them.
 - iv. When I first became a youth pastor, I had to stand up here and speak a few times a year. And I had no idea what I was doing. But sitting right there every Sunday I preached was a dear older lady who smiled as big as she could smile at me, occasionally nodding with approval. To this day, I remember her encouragement by her smile.
 - v. My pastor on the other hand, he never cracked a smile. He just sat there, staring at me.
 - vi. Maybe it's an investment of time. ► ^{NLT} **2 Corinthians 7:6** But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.
 - vii. I bet if I polled the room, every one of us could identify a person who made an impact in our life by their encouragement.
 - viii. Just about every place I looked at in the New Testament was encouragement coming at the hands of people. Like we said last week about faith and fear. Life is meant to be lived in community. Isolation only adds to discouragement.
 - ix. You have the privilege of bringing encouragement to people who are discouraged.
- d. Promises
- i. Lastly, we bring down ► discouragement with God's promises. While discouragement is an emotion we can't always control, we can continue to relive God's promises over and over again. And when we do, God can encourage us. That is, he can give us more courage; he can add to our hope. God's promises can lift our heart. He can restore our shattered, disheartened spirit. Listen to some of God's promises.
 - ii. ► ^{NLT} **Psalm 147:3** He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.
 - iii. ► ^{NLT} **Psalm 34:18** The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.
 - iv. ► ^{NLT} **Isaiah 41:10** Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.
 - v. ► ^{NLT} **Romans 8:1** So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.
 - vi. ► ^{NLT} **1 Peter 1:5** And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power...
 - vii. And the list could go on and on.

So, we ► bring down discouragement with pouring, praising, people and promises.

Conclusion:

You know, every person in here this morning is currently being affected by discouragement. You are either discouraged and need some encouragement or you can be God's tool to help encourage someone else. And I hope to accomplish both of those things in the next few minutes.

I have a confession to make. Sometimes I get discouraged. And last Sunday was one of those days for me. And it came at the most inopportune times. After first service, discouragement hit me quick as I experienced some of the things I spoke of earlier: things like fear and defeat and being overwhelmed. Things run through my head like I talked too long; I didn't say things the way I wanted, I felt like I had not done well and second service was looming. And to be honest, I wasn't looking that forward to speaking again. But second service started, and something happened. Worship was different. Maybe it was because people seemed more involved or there were more people, I was encouraged by the participation. It lifted my spirits. I stopped focusing on my failure and the daunting task of speaking again. Not because I told myself to stop focusing, but because when I was encouraged, those things weren't so big. So, this morning, we're going to close by singing some songs that help us pour out to God, Praise Him, recognize people and remember God's promises. If you find yourself in a place of discouragement this morning, I hope you are encouraged. If you aren't discouraged this morning, I hope you'll us this time as an opportunity to encourage people by participating.

Will you pray with me?