

Enjoying God

As you all know, I have a full house. There are five of us and two puppies in the house. It is loud and busy all the time. With dogs that go in and out of the doggy door and constant use, our house can get messy very quick. Since all of us work full-time it is hard to carve out time to deep clean. So, we decided to hire a cleaning lady to do our bathrooms, floors, dusting, and other deep cleaning. Since the kids won't do any of the cleaning, we charge them \$25 each time the cleaning lady comes. It works out for everyone. Well, let me rephrase that. It works out well for everyone except the puppies. I raised my two dogs since they were both five and a half weeks old. Even though I socialized them and have given them unconditional love, they hate every person and every dog on the planet. So, this presents a problem when the cleaning lady comes. I thought of a great idea this past Friday. When the cleaning lady came, I took both my puppies and my laptop over to the empty staff house. The pups could run around, and I could type away and the cleaning lady could be undisturbed. It was funny to see my dogs in a different environment. They went through all the emotions. Joy over new smells, fear over the unknown, and confusion. Every couple of minutes they would come over to me at my little plastic table and chair and get pets. Now, let me just say, if I just dumped my dogs off in that empty house and left, it would have traumatized them. They would have been confused and scared. They could only conquer a different environment and even have fun...only because I was there. As long as they had eyes on me, they were comfortable and free to have fun.

I share this with you to illustrate that we can find ourselves in serious trouble when we take our eyes off of God. We can walk in fear, confusion, and even depression when we take our focus off of the Lord and onto ourselves or our circumstances.

Today I am going to take a break from our series on Ephesians. Early this week I battled some very difficult discouragement. I was pretty numb Monday and Tuesday. I'm not sure if you have ever battled discouragement...but I sure do. One thing is certain though, if I am miserable, I will do whatever it takes to not be miserable. So, in my pursuit of leaving discouragement behind I have written a sermon on what the Lord revealed to me. Here is what I am setting out to prove today through the Word of God. **I believe that the remedy for depression and discouragement is an unwavering and unbroken fellowship with the Lord.** That's why I have titled this message today "Enjoying God." What is the secret to leaving discouragement behind? It is enjoying God. I want to show you today through the scripture that regardless of what you face in life and what your emotions are doing, you can have unbroken fellowship with the Lord. You can turn to Him at any moment in your life.

Today, I want to look at Psalm 42 in its entirety. If you have a Bible, go with me to the 42nd Psalm. You will notice that this is a psalm, a maskil of the sons of Korah. Why is it important to understand that this psalm is written by the sons of Korah and as a maskil. Well, a maskil is a preaching type of song. This psalm was meant to be sung as a way of remembering easily. Who were the sons of Korah? The sons of Korah were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2 Chronicles 20:19). Korah led a rebellion of 250 community leaders against Moses during the wilderness days of the Exodus (Numbers 16). God judged Korah and his leaders and they all died, but the sons of Korah remained (Numbers 26:9-11). Perhaps they were so grateful for this mercy that they became

notable in Israel for praising God. The sons of Korah walked in a different path than their rebellious ancestors. Eleven of the Psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah and I am grateful the first one is a song to be remembered about overcoming discouragement and depression. Let's begin in verse 1:

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" 4 These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. 5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence. 6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. 7 Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. 8 The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life. 9 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" 10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" 11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God. – Psalm 42 NASB1995

#1 – Seek God with everything and in everything.

My family and I lived in San Antonio and the Boerne area for a little bit of time. There is one big thing I noticed about living down there versus living in the DFW area. Deer are everywhere down there. SO many trucks have these massive steel front bumper guards because of the danger of hitting a deer. One of our friends had a brand-new Mercedes SUV almost totaled by hitting a deer. I know hunters like Andrew get annoyed that if you accidentally snap a twig while waiting to shoot a deer, they can hear it and take off running. But if you are about to hit one on the highway with your horn blaring and high beams on, they will just sit there. We don't see a lot of wildlife here in the city, but one thing is very true, we will see them when they get desperate. I saw a racoon in my front yard right here on main street the other day, just chomping away on someone's discarded McDonald's trash. Wildlife will venture into the city when they are hungry or dehydrated. They become desperate and do things they don't normally do.

The psalmist here opens with an analogy of a panting deer in search of water. It is the only thing the animal cares about or is thinking about. The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon said this, "Ease he did not seek, honor he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag."

The Psalmist opens the psalm with a focus on God. He never loses focus on this Lord the entire time. He is showing us that we can go through various emotions (good and bad) and not lose sight of the Lord. How many know that when you are miserable or depressed, the only thing you can focus on is the relief. "When will this end? Will things ever be different?" But focusing on

the suffering will not end the suffering. Focusing on unbroken fellowship with the Lord is the remedy. Only He has supernatural peace. Only He has revelation that will break you out of the rut you are in. Jesus declared “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” In every way we can, we need to seek the Lord and keep our focus on Him.

#2 – Be honest with yourself and the Word.

While we all would love to seek God with all our hearts at all times, that isn’t always the case. Sometimes life gets to “life-ing” and we fall off track in seeking God. The psalmist said that his tears were his food day and night, and that people were mocking him. In verse 7 it seems like it is one wave after another. He feels as if he is drowning. I remember having a conversation with a friend of mine when he was facing the pain of the death of his nine-year-old daughter. He told me that the grief and pain just come in waves, sometimes out of nowhere. It’s so true that when you are tired, overworked, and face multiple issues at one time, it is so easy to get so discouraged, so quickly.

As much as we want to be spiritual superheroes, we still live in the flesh in this world. We need to be honest with ourselves but never bow from the truth found in the Word. We have to remind ourselves that we are a spirit, that has a soul, and that lives in a body. Our spiritman is our true identity even though we encounter depression in our soul. The psalmist here remembered both the bad times from the past *and* remembered the goodness of the Lord. The fact is that you are battling something, but the truth is that God has overcome it.

I have felt so many physical aspects of depression and anxiety. But isn’t it amazing that in all the despair and depression of life, your memory doesn’t cease. If you are really depressed guess what? You can bring to mind all the reasons why you should be depressed. But here’s the hope. If your memory is still intact during the times of despair, you can turn your memory to the things of God. Psalm 77:11 says, “I will remember the deeds of the Lord, yes I will remember your wonders of old.” When we take communion, we do so to remember the finished work of the Lord. Jesus set it in place so that we would forever purpose ourselves to remember what He has done for us. Here’s the thing: If I am not convinced by God’s voice then I will entertain something that isn’t true about me, my situations, and this world. So, yes we need to be honest that we still live in the flesh but we must consume ourselves with the Word of God so that we can overcome the moments of discouragement.

#3 – Talk to yourself.

There’s a book out there called, “You’re crazy if you don’t talk to yourself.” David in Psalm 103:1 said, “Praise the Lord oh my soul.” That was a command not a suggestion. David from his spirit was speaking to his soul and commanding it to praise the Lord.

One pastor said, “Outside of God, no one is more influential as you are to you because no one talks to you as much as you do.” You don’t have to wait until you feel better or your circumstances change to move forward in faith. Consuming the Word of God is so key in these moments. You can be the saddest you have ever felt, but if you open up the Word of God you

will 100% hear His voice. One pastor said, “When I am battling discouragement, I will open up the psalms and read until I can hear my own voice in the verses.”

You and I need a personal theology of our identity in Christ. You can only defend and stand upon that which you truly believe in.

#4 – Pre-decide to follow and trust God.

One powerful thing about leading a church is having a clear vision for the church. We are called to be a missional house of God. Our vision is to encounter God and express His love and power. It is a combination of the Old Testament tent of David in which there was 24/7 worship directed to God and the New Testament church in which the saints are equipped and care for one another. We are a house of God because everything is all about Him, but we are also a church that teaches and takes care of each other. So, because we are a house of God that attracts God first and foremost, we are not going to entertain the seeker sensitive model of church. So if someone in the church says, “Hey we think smoke machines and lasers for the stage would be really good. It would help bring in younger people into the church” we are going to say no. Why? Because it doesn’t line up with our vision. It is not who we are. When it comes to battling depression or sorrow, we have to remember who we are and the vision God has given us. We are more than conquerors even though in our soul we don’t feel like it. You have to pre-decide that whatever emotions you face in the day, you will trust and follow God. Your job isn’t going to always be fun. Your marriage is not always going to be easy. But you pre-decide to stay faithful and work hard.