

## Fighting Discouragement In The Small Church

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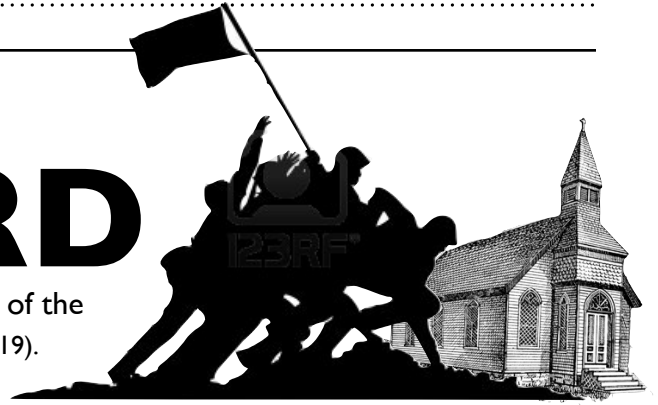


## The Big Church Myth

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# Lifting Up The STANDARD

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).



Challenging And Encouraging God's Remnant To Remain Faithful

Issue 2 - January 2014



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## Encouragement

### Second Corinthians 1:3-5,

*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”*

**The following is an outline of a message recently preached by Mark Galgalan at FairHavens Baptist Church. Mark is sixteen years old.**

When life is tiring, when you are struggling with your sin, when family members aren't saved, when school is difficult, when work is exhausting, when health is failing, when loved ones are hurt, and when good friends walk away from God, it is easy to become discouraged and have discouragement.

The dictionary says discouragement is, “A feeling of having lost hope or confidence—something which discourages.”

#### Discouragement:

- Is a thief
- Steals you away from your joy, zeal, peace, vitality, and contentment
- Dwells long within you: you'll begin to have self-pity, depression, despair, hopelessness, doubt, and bitterness

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Mark Galgalan

*“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*  
(Proverbs 3:5,6)

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- Can be so strong that you don't want to go on living and serving God.

**Discouragement is...**

- Dissatisfaction with the past
- Distaste for the present
- Distrust of the future – it is the result of blindness
- Ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday
- Indifference to the opportunities of today
- Insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow
- Unawareness of the presence of God, unconcern for the needs of our fellow men, and unbelief in the promises of God's Word

If we have nothing to rely on or if we forget our blessings and look to our circumstances...then that is when discouragement will kick in and take hold in our lives. Instead what we need is ENCOURAGEMENT.

The dictionary describes encouragement as,  
*"The action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope. Something that cheers and helps on, an inducement."*

Over ten times in the book of Second Corinthians, you will find some form of the word "comfort." Four times you will find the word "consolation," and twice you will find the word exhortation. All come from the same root word meaning "encouragement."

We should have hope, peace, and knowledge that the Lord knows our troubles, has great concern, and has compassion for us; and He is not leaving us unloved or uncared for. It is also important to touch base on how we can encourage ourselves and reasons to encourage ourselves in the Lord...

**Keeping our eyes on Jesus is the best way to be encouraged.**

In Him, we can have comfort and peace. We need to find Him and His Word, and by faith – rest in Him. We should be encouraged because God is a God of mercy and comfort (verse 3). In the Greek, the word "mercy" is oiktirmos. It means compassion and pity; and it's something that's felt in the heart.

In God's very heart, He shows mercy toward us. He is the Author of mercy. His mercy toward us brings salvation, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from eternal damnation...and this is because of Jesus, because of His sacrifice, and because of His shed blood for you. God is the God of mercy.

**In Psalm 86:5, it says,**

*"For Though, Lord art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."*

God is also called the God of all comfort. The Greek word for comfort is paraklesis – and it is translated exhortation and encouragement. In fact, a form of this word parakletos is used for the Holy Spirit. That is why the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter.

**John 14:26,**

*"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

The word Comforter can also be thought of as "Helper." – All this shows you is that God is a God of mercy and comfort; and all comfort comes from God.

It isn't an angel, cosmic force, a pill, psychotherapy, or a quick and clever slogan that says comfort on it. No, it is God; and it comes from God – but you make ask, "How is the comfort received from God?" It is simply by faith. Since God says He is the God of comfort, we need to believe it and act upon it; that is we need to trust Him and receive His comfort as He provides it.

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The Kirklands

It has been our experience as we travelled this country from coast to coast for many years, that most of our fundamental churches are maintained by small groups of sincere Christians.

From Newfoundland to Vancouver, faithful pastors and their faithful members have met for years in small churches that will be small churches a hundred years from now if the Lord delays His coming. God does not consider these churches to be failures.

**Success Cannot Be Determined By Size**

God's mandate is that we are faithfully "Holding fast the faithful word..." (Titus 1:9). Jesus said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few..." (Matthew 25:23). The church at Smyrna was known for it's "poverty" and yet was highly commended by the Lord. The church at Philadelphia had "...a little strength" and was highly commended by the Lord. The church at Sardis had "...a few names" and was highly commended by the Lord. The church at Laodicea was sharply rebuked, not because it was big but because it compromised to "increase" the attendance.

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**"Every man's work shall be tried for what sort it is" not what size it is!**

(Proverbs 15:16)

Encouragement continued from page two...

In other ways, God uses His people (other Christians) to comfort us. Usually when we face problems and situations, the Lord will send someone down our path to comfort us. We also need to take encouragement because God is there for us in our tribulations (verse 4).

Tribulation in the Greek is the word thlipsis: it can be translated as trouble, anguish, persecutions, burden, and affliction. (back in verse 4 put affliction in place). Tribulations and afflictions can come in all different ways, shapes, and sizes. It can be sickness, financial difficulty, and loss of a loved one – anything. Something important to realize is that those afflictions and tribulations occur in the heart, which is the same place we feel frustrated, distraught, and confused. Why do we even have afflictions?

### **Second Timothy 3:12,**

*“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*

The same word there means afflictions.

### **James 1:2-4,**

*“My brother count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”*

**Patience** - tribulation worketh patience. Tribulations and afflictions are a way of making us better; and that’s how it should be looked at, and how it should be attacked – the testing and strengthening of our faith through Jesus. We don’t have to worry whether or not He is going to take care of us. He already has at the cross; and He will continue to take care of us. We should be encouraged because we can be instruments of comfort to others (verse 4).

- This glorifies God if we comfort others
- Being used by God makes us feel good but that isn’t the only reason to help
- But it does feel good and rewarding when the Holy Spirit uses us to do good unto some others.

We need to praise God that we even have had afflictions so that we may be able to help others.

- How many of you because of some trial or situation have been able to help another because of that trial?
- You see, God does not comfort us to make us comfortable.
- Comfortable is derived from comfort.
- But rather, God comforts us to make us comforters.
- When you suffer, you learn to care.
- That is why God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters.
- But don’t forget, He suffered first...
- We should be encouraged because the comfort we receive from God comes through Jesus Christ (verse 5).
- This means that all comfort and encouragement that we receive from people, through the Word of God, or through circumstances are through Jesus Christ...
- Therefore, the comfort is pure, good, and true.
- Where our sufferings are abundant – so is our comfort.
- And this comfort is a spiritual comfort – that’s received by faith and by choice.

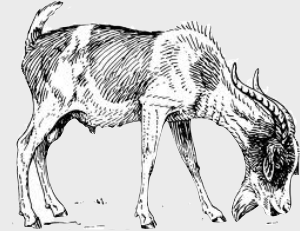
### **Conclusion**

So closing out – as we finish off another year and go into 2014, what is really important to instill in your hearts and minds is to be encouraged.

- Go into the New Year with an encouraged heart.

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The number of people sitting in a meeting may be a gauge of success for man; however, as God looks at our so-called mega churches, He knows how many “goats” there are sitting among the “sheep.”



### **What Do Goats Eat?**

There are thirty-two noxious plants found in the state of Montana, and goats eat all of them. Goats are used to control weeds because they eat the weeds and leave the grass. Sheep will eat weeds if that is all that is available, however, once sheep eat weeds it is difficult to get them to eat grass again.

If they are going to keep the goats coming to their meetings they will need to have food that will satisfy their cravings. Therefore, the sheep will have to learn to be satisfied with the weeds. The watchword for the mega church might be found in Job 31:40 where we read, *“Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle (weeds) instead of barley.”*

### **Success Cannot Be Determined By Size.**

A church that has hundreds of people sitting in a building getting their weekly fix of religion while remaining spiritual pygmies, is not a successful church in God’s eyes. God wants people who are capable of, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9).

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Encouragement continued from page three...

Don't let the trials and situations of this year trouble and discourage you in the New Year.

- Look to God for help and comfort.
- Encourage one another.
- All of this will be an encouragement to you.
- Encouragement is something that we all have as Christians.
- We don't have to live our lives in hurt or in doubt.
- We don't have to live alone or weep in solitude.

**We have...**

- The body of Christ to lift us up.
- The Word of God to teach us and direct us.
- The Holy Spirit dwelling within us who will guide and lead us into all truth.

Most importantly, we have God. We have God, the God of encouragement who is waiting to show us His mercy and His love. But we need to trust...And as Christians, we need to remember the Lord's blessings...

We need to depend on Him and keep our eyes on Jesus and Him alone. Don't set your eyes or your focus on man to the point where you only see to man and not through to God. Don't set all of your trust in your pastor, either. We're humans – we make mistakes, disappoint people, and break our promises.

**But I'm glad we serve a God who...**

- Is perfect
- Never lets us down
- Never disappoints
- Never leaves us nor forsakes us

When everyone has left and gone, God is still there for us.

And I'm thankful we serve a God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

**Matthew 11:28,**

*"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

**Verses 29-30,**

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Look to God for encouragement, and you will have that true peace and comfort. And with that encouragement give it to others.

- Whether it be calling someone, letting them know you care, or writing a note of encouragement, or praying.

That's what I personally want to focus on: to be an encouragement to others, to let them know they are appreciated, and to care.

It all basically comes down to love.

**Colossians 3:14,**

*"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."*

Love needs to abound more and more.

And if we truly love one another, we'll encourage each other because of that.

So I hope that these words were an encouragement to your heart and a comfort to your souls as it was for me.

I hope you will take these things that you have heard tonight and put it to practice (put it to work).

GOD BLESS!

Continued from page three.

**Swelling Is Not Growth**

You can smack your thumb with a hammer and you will have swelling, however, swelling and growth are two different things. There is much swelling in the ranks of our so-called fundamentalism, that may be impressing some people; however, God is not impressed.



God's mandate is that we are faithfully, "...holding fast the faithful word..." (Titus 1:9).

Ninety-nine percent of God's churches in this world are small churches.

**The Small Church Can Be Discouraging**

It takes a special person to pastor a small church. If God has put you in a small church, He has given you a ministry that many pastors cannot handle.

God knew what He was doing when He sent you to pastor the church you are in. First Corinthians 4:1-2 says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

To the pastor in the small church who is faithfully standing for the truth year after year, be encouraged! Jesus said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few..." (Matthew 25:23).

When your life's work is ended be sure you can pray before you leave and say, "...I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).