

Learning To Talk To Yourself

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[0:00] Psalm 42. Psalm 42. As the deer pants for streams of water,!

As I pour out my soul, how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

My soul is downcast within me, therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon, from Mount Mizar, deep calls to deep, and the roar of your waterfalls.

All your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day, the Lord directs His love. At night, His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

[1:22] I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning? oppressed by the enemy? My bones suffer mortal agony, as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, where is your God?

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

God. Our text is Psalm 42. At a desperate time in my life, approximately five months ago, God mercifully and almost miraculously led me to hear a message from this text by C.J. Mahaney.

And I want to share it with you and the impact that it has had on my life as I have sought to apply the primary principle from this text.

And I must give him credit for much of the language that you are about to hear. The title of this message is Learning to Talk to Myself.

[2:40] Learning to Talk to Myself. My subtitle, How to Go from a Discouraged Christian to an Encouraged Christian.

Paul Tripp wrote a book entitled Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand. Listen carefully as he describes the most influential voice in your life.

In the midst of all the voices that are vying for your attention, there is one voice, one voice raised above all others, that always has your attention.

Always. See if you can recognize this voice. I find myself saying it all the time. When people hear it, they laugh. But actually, I'm being quite serious when I say it.

No one, no one is more influential in your life than you are because no one talks to you more than you do. You're in an unending conversation with yourself.

[3:46] You're talking to yourself all the time. Interpreting, organizing, analyzing what's going on inside you and around you. You may be talking to yourself about why you feel so tired.

Or maybe you woke up this morning with a sense of dread and you're not sure why. Perhaps you're reliving a conversation that didn't go too well yesterday. Or maybe you're preparing yourself for a conversation and you want to be sure you've got all your bases covered.

Maybe your mind has traveled back to your distant past. And for reasons you don't understand, you're recalling events from your early childhood. The point is, you are constantly involved in an internal conversation that greatly influences the things you decide, say, and do.

What do you regularly tell yourself about yourself? About yourself? About your God? About your circumstances? Do your words to yourself encourage faith and hope?

Or do they stimulate doubt, discouragement, and fear? Do you remind yourself that God is near? Or do you reason within yourself, given your circumstances, that he must be distant?

[5:12] Do you encourage yourself to run to God, even though you don't understand what he's doing? Or do you give yourself permission to back away from God when you're confused about the seeming difference between what he's promised and what you are currently experiencing?

Here's the question. How faith-driven and Christ-centered is the conversation that you have with you every day?

Wow. Did you catch that? No one is more influential in your life than you are because no one talks to you more than you do.

You're in an unending conversation with yourself. This conversation never ceases. It began when you woke up this morning and it will continue until you fall asleep this evening.

It is actually taking place right now within you even as I am speaking. What in the world is this goofball talking about?

[6:25] Sounds like a bunch of psycho babble. Well, this evening we're going to consider and examine this unending conversation taking place within us every day.

And yet I found that rarely was I examining the content of this conversation or considering its influence on my life. We tend to think it's inconsequential, that it has little significance.

If so, we are mistaken. Because this internal conversation is the difference maker in your soul every day.

I've begun to realize that there is a direct relationship with the quality of my conversation with myself and my relationship with my God each and every day.

In Psalm 42, we have the unique opportunity to hear the psalmist's conversation with himself. God has chosen to tape record it and play it back to us so that we might benefit from it and examine the internal conversation, our internal conversation, and the influence it has on our lives.

[7:48] Now, word of warning. when you pay attention to what you're saying to yourself, it can get kind of scary. I remember this past spring break.

I had just heard this message and I'm laying on the Florida beach with a bunch of squawking, complaining, female seagulls who were disturbing my peace.

Reese, I'll tell you after church how I know they were female. And soon I hear myself saying to myself, I wonder if next year I could bring my slingshot down here and start picking these suckers off one by one.

Or maybe I can talk Deb into bringing Larry Martin with us on vacation and we could build a blind in that sand hill and then I could enjoy some peace and quiet on my vacation.

Two main points tonight. Number one, the discouraged soul. The discouraged soul. And then we'll look at number two, the encouraged soul.

[9:06] First, the discouraged soul. It's immediately obvious that all is not well in the soul of the psalmist. The mood of this psalm is clear.

This man's soul is troubled. Notice verse 5. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?

His soul is discouraged. He's disturbed and in turmoil. Again in verse 6. My soul is downcast within me. Notice the repetition in verse 11.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? And it even spills over into chapter 43 verse 5.

Why are you downcast, my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Why? Perhaps you're familiar with these feelings.

[10:09] feelings. As we read through this psalm, the mood of the psalm resonated in your soul. And to differing degrees, we're all familiar with feelings of discouragement.

But we need to be prepared for this experience or we'll be vulnerable to temptation and sin when it comes. And that's precisely what the psalmist is doing.

He's preparing us to face discouragement head on. And he's going to teach us how we respond biblically. What I love about the psalms is there's no pretending here.

There's no plain church. The psalms express honest human feelings and emotion, but in the context of faith.

In the psalms, you meet God right where you are. Now, it appears that the psalmist's soul is discouraged due to three things.

[11:12] His soul is discouraged first of all because of the apparent absence of God. The apparent absence of God verses 1-4.

Now, most scholars think this is David speaking, and we know that David had a heart for God. Notice how he begins. This is not at a time when David had fallen into sin.

He actually starts by sharing his thirst for God. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? The psalmist has a thirsty soul. He is passionately pursuing God and compares it to a deer desperate for a drink of cool water.

He is thirsty for God, yet his soul is downcast and disturbed. How can that be? How can these two be going on in his soul at the same time?

[12 : 25] Verse 3. My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, where is your God?

Even though he longs for God, he feels distant from God. Though he is thirsty for God, he feels alienated from God.

Deep inside he has a passion for God, yet he feels forgotten and abandoned by God. Meet a man who desires God's presence but feels God's absence.

His sense of abandonment is only heightened by his memory of past experiences when he was with God's people in God's house and he felt that spiritual high.

Verse 4. These things I remember as I pour out my soul. How I used to go with the multitude leading the procession to the house of God with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.

[13 : 39] And he passionately desires a renewed feeling of those high times of worship when his soul was so bursting with thanksgiving that he erupted in shouts of joy.

joy. And the psalmist is thirsty to experience this again. But it ain't happening. You can be thirsty for God, long for God, be serving God, and yet at times not be able to sense a nearness to God.

And this sense of absence from God contributes to his discouraged soul. Many of God's choices servants struggle with this very problem.

You remember that illustration when Martin Luther was battling depression. His wife Catherine, seeing him unresponsive to any word of encouragement, appeared one morning in black mourning clothes.

No word of explanation was forthcoming. So Luther, who had heard nothing of a bereavement, asked her, Catherine, why are you dressed in morning black?

[15 : 02] Someone has died, she replied. Died, said Luther. I have not heard of anyone dying. Whoever could have died? It seems, his wife replied, that God must have died.

Luther got the point. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones would side with Catherine, and several times in his book entitled Spiritual Depression, I appreciated his admonition to my discouraged soul.

Listen, the most important reason we must face this problem is for the sake of the kingdom of God and his glory. In a sense, a depressed Christian is a contradiction of terms and a very poor recommendation for the gospel.

Again, later on, looking at things superficially, the world often comes to the conclusion that you find happier people outside the church than inside the church.

church. We must recognize that some of us at any rate have to plead guilty to the charge. Far too often we are miserable Christians and we grossly and grievously misrepresent the gospel of redeeming grace.

[16 : 32] Now, while Dr. Jones agrees that some of us have personalities that are more prone to discouragement and certainly poor health, long trials, and even the weather can contribute to our discouragement, yet he wouldn't cut me any slack.

Guilty as charged. discouraged. Well, the second thing that is causing his soul to be discouraged is the apparent presence of trials.

The apparent presence of trials. He speaks of these trials in verse 7. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls. All your waves and breakers have swept over me.

These deep waters, are a symbol of trials and suffering. And he likens them to a waterfall, where the water just never stops coming.

They are continual, relentless, and overwhelming. They keep coming like the waves of an ocean, one after another, day after a day.

[17 : 52] Have you ever felt like that? they've swept over me. God, if you put one more thing on my plate, I just can't handle this situation anymore.

And our souls get discouraged, downcast, depressed, and deeply disturbed. What else is contributing to his discouragement?
movement. Number three, the opposition of the godless society around him. The opposition of the godless society around him.

We saw it in the end of verse three. While men say to me all day long, where is your God? Verse nine, I say to God my rock, why have you forgotten me?

Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? Verse ten, my bones suffer mortal agony.

[19:00] This is sapping his strength. As my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, where is your God?

Where is your God? Where is your God? Our culture is opposed to God and his word.

And no matter how humbly you hold to your convictions, the world hated Christ and you will feel its hostility. You're seeking to live a God-centered life for his glory.

And while you may not hear those exact words, where is your God? Monday mornings, you're thrust into a world that has no thought of God in anything they do all day long.

Where is your God? And this opposition covers a wide range of subjects homosexuality, abortion, the role of women living together before marriage, removing every hint of God from our schools, the right to spank our children, the acceptance of all religions.

[20:25] Who are you to say that Jesus is the only way man can be reconciled to God? and it comes at us from all directions.

You experience this opposition from neighbors, relatives, co-workers, teachers, friends, coaches, and it makes you feel alone in the battle.

That opposition can have an effect on your soul. It did the psalmist. But, in the middle of all these negative thoughts that he's listening to, by God's grace, something changes.

There is an interruption in this unending conversation. How does the psalmist address his discouraged soul?

What did he do? We see the proper response in part two, the encouraged soul. The encouraged soul.

[21:38] When your soul is downcast and discouraged, when you feel like God is absent and you are being overwhelmed by trials and opposition, what should you do?

This is precisely what the psalmist is going to model for us. Two points. Number one, talk to yourself. Number two, talk to your God.

Talk to yourself. Talk to God. Number one, talk to yourself. This is exactly what he's doing in verse five and verse eleven.

He says to himself, self, why are you downcast, oh my soul? Why am I disturbed? He's butting in on this unending conversation with himself.

Do you do this? Children, this is the one time it's okay to interrupt. Okay, you keep hearing mommy and daddy say, don't interrupt.

[22:50] Don't interrupt. You can interrupt yourself. And you need to interrupt yourself. The psalmist is challenging himself, rebuking himself, stirring himself up.

He's grabbing himself by the nap of the neck and he's saying, self, listen for a moment. I am going to speak to you. Dr.

Martin Lloyd Jones' first chapter in his book on spiritual depression brings us to this very text. Listen to his advice.

The first thing we have to learn is what the psalmist learned. He talks to himself. I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression is this.

We allow ourselves to talk to us instead of talking to ourselves. a little later.

[23:55] Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself.

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself at hand.

You have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul, why are you cast down?

What business do you have to be disturbed? Wow. Have you realized that most of your discouragement is the result of listening to yourself rather than talking to yourself?

What have you done about that? This same principle can be applied anytime we feel irritated, frustrated, worried, disappointed, or struggling with fears.

[25 : 09] Each day I have one simple choice. I can listen to myself and my constant changing feelings with all the lies they feed me, or I can talk truth to myself and address my discouraged soul with the promises of Almighty God.

Many of us have spent years listening to ourselves, ourselves, but we rarely talk to ourselves. C.J. Mahaney says, it is a learned skill and requires practice. It will not happen without effort, and we must do it depending on God and His grace.

And oh, FYI, discouraged souls are not instantly transformed into encouraged souls with just one brief chat.

He's discouraged in verse 5. We come to verse 6 and He's still downcast and disturbed. And He's still struggling when we come to verse 11.

[26 : 31] This is not something where you just flip the switch and the light of an encouraged soul turns on. It requires repetition and perseverance.

But as you begin to sow truth to your soul, eventually you reap the blessed effects. Perhaps you're wondering, what do I say to myself?

love. The psalmist gives us an excellent starter kit. And its content is quite simple. Verse 5. Put your hope in God for I will yet praise Him my Savior and my God.

Verse 11. Put your hope in God. We heard that before. For I will yet praise Him my Savior and my God.

Say to your soul, soul, hope in God. He begins by looking outward and upward.

[27 : 51] Kristen, that phrase hope in God is a parallel phrase to Proverbs 3.5. Trust in the Lord. Same phrase.

Okay? And it's doing what you shared with us Wednesday night. It's repeating it over and over and preaching to ourselves. Trust in the Lord. Hope in God.

And don't stop till you heard yourself and got the message. The psalmist is refusing to be governed by his circumstances because circumstances often lie to us.

My discouraged soul cannot be trusted. Discouraged souls tell us God cannot be for you. He's forgotten you.

I can't see God being active in this situation. God doesn't really understand what I can handle. I've already reached my breaking point.

[28 : 54] We must tell our soul hope in God trust in the Lord and the psalmist tells himself again in verse six I will remember God for I will yet praise him.

At some point in the future hope assures my soul that those sorrows like sea billows roll it is well with my soul soul hope in God Spurgeon says when we cannot see God's hand we must trust God's heart heart now this is just a starter kit and certainly you can add to it in some ways it depends on what is disturbing your soul and causing your discouragement find appropriate promises for your situation and then by God's grace speak truth to your soul stop listening to your soul and instead use God's remedy and the living active word will transform your soul from a discouraged soul to an encouraged soul talk truth to your soul children did you know that you can learn to do this did you ever wake up in a bad mood and you feel grouchy it feels like it's just going to be one of those days where you just want to complain to mom or argue with brothers and sisters have mommy and daddy help you find a truth that you can take and talk to yourself or take a verse that you've learned on

Wednesday night and talk to yourself just like you do your dolls Molly you do talk to your dolls right we had a daughter who liked to boss her dolls around I'd be in the other room and I'd hear now you listen to me Philippians 2 14 says do everything without complaining or arguing take that verse and talk to yourself just like you would talk to your dolls Kate you're not talking to your dolls are you tell yourself self I want you to listen to me for a minute and then use a verse to speak truth to your soul personally

I've benefited as I've sought to learn to preach the gospel to myself to take gospel truths what is the gospel five things you remember number one Christ help us Allie we're pathetic here Christ died for our sins and was raised did I get it right tell dad I did a good job and a proper appreciation for this good news requires me to remember the bad news that almighty God was angry with me because my selfish heart refused to live for his glory and I deserve to be in hell right now because of my

wicked sins against this good God Jerry Bridges in his book

The Discipline of Grace says to preach the gospel to yourself simply means that you continually face up to your own sinfulness and then flee to Jesus through faith in his shed blood and righteous life you know what I find that when I remind myself of what I deserve it tends to spoil my pity parties and then to meditate on the truth that God is for me not because of my performance but solely because of Jesus he who would not give his own son a break but gave him up for me Stan how in the world will this incredibly gracious God not give me everything

[34:12] I need today for my happiness Romans 8:32 Milton Witzit wrote a small paperback called a gospel primer on my worst days of sin and failure the gospel encourages me with God's unrelenting grace towards me and on my best days of victory and usefulness the gospel keeps me relating to God solely on the basis of Jesus righteousness number one talk to yourself secondly talk to God verse 8 talk to God by day the Lord directs his love at night his song is with me a prayer to the God of my life the psalmist talks to

God in song and in prayer God loves it when we take his promises and pray them back to him quote him a promise and then boldly beg God please do as you've promised but tonight I want to focus on the psalmist comment on singing it sounds as though he's using a song to be a prayer to God as a way to talk to God have you ever tried that in God's providence several months before I heard this message I had been reading through Ephesians and I became convicted and convinced in chapter 5 that a Christian who is filled by the spirit is a Christian who is regularly singing God says don't be drunk with wine and let alcohol control your actions instead be filled and controlled by the spirit well what does that look like he tells us two things sing and make music in your heart to the

Lord I talk to God when I sing second always give thanks to God for everything my prayers to God are to be filled with thanksgiving I have a question are we only to be filled with the spirit on Sunday when is the last time you sang a song to your God outside of the walls of this church building yet God has ordained that singing be a primary means of how we are to communicate with him along with prayers that are full of giving thanks for everything we sang it this morning praise is his gracious choice praise is his gracious choice and you know what

I've experienced that by God's grace as I seek to memorize a hymn and then sing that hymn to my God as I'm riding my bike to work and as I find my prayers to God overflowing with thanksgiving this discouraged soul becomes an encouraged soul actually you can kill two birds with one stone when you sing because singing is a great way to talk to yourself and to talk to God discouraged souls become encouraged souls as we sing truth to our soul and to our God as we close I want to remind us of the beauty of our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ whose soul was uniquely downcast and disturbed it was in the garden of

Gethsemane just before he faced the wrath of his father on the cross he states my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow even to the point of death oh my father if it's possible may this cup be taken from me yet not my will but thine be done and a little later being in anguish he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground the savior soul was uniquely troubled as he contemplated facing the wrath of God as he took the sins of his people upon himself on the cross and on the cross he would scream in indescribable agony my

[39:54] God why have you forsaken me the psalmist felt forsaken by God the savior was forsaken by God the psalmist soul was downcast as he felt an absence of God's presence the savior was abandoned by God and his soul was crushed by the fury of God's righteous wrath as he took our sins on himself Jesus was forsaken!

so that we might be forgiven Jesus was abandoned so that we might always know the steadfast love and favor of God oh if you're a sinner friend here tonight put all your hope in heaven in this beautiful savior let's pray oh who is a God like you who pardons sin and to think that we have the privilege to hear in our own language this beautiful love story for wretches like us God forgive us for allowing our souls to remain discouraged worried irritated flustered and give us strength to apply this principle that we might live lives worthy of your name in

Jesus precious name we pray because it's only through him that we can even talk to you amen