

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with God through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

Please help us with your donation. Your support will not only keep this program on the air, but will allow us to continue providing these materials on a weekly basis to thousands of people as a gift of encouragement. We need YOU to partner with us. All gifts are tax deductible. Please make your gift payable to Celebration Ministries.

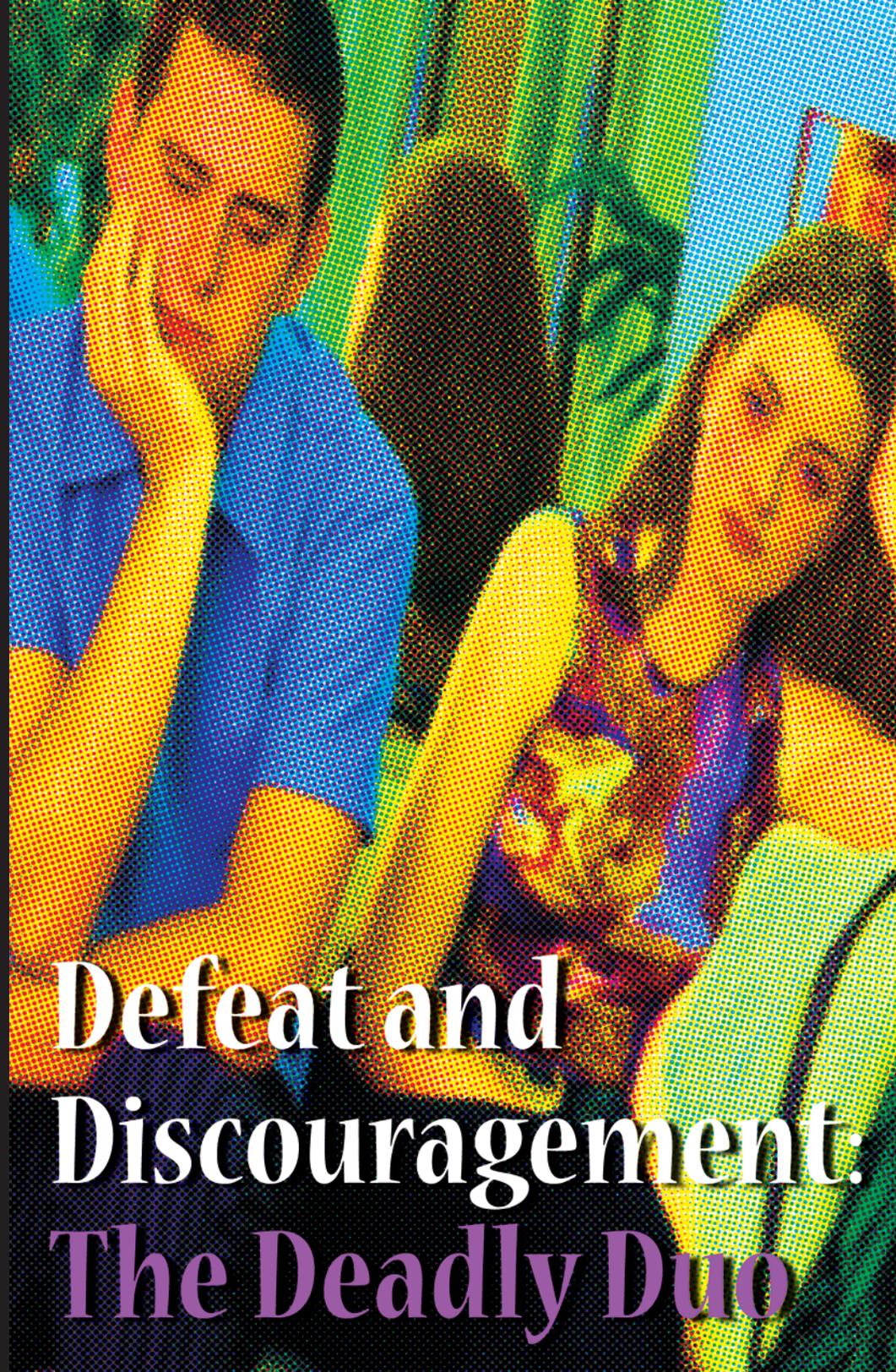
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Sincerely,



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# Defeat and Discouragement: The Deadly Duo



When Al Denson speaks to students—more than 2,000,000 face to face — he comes with his own story of struggle and tragedy. In December 1994, Al's much publicized, near-death experience in the crash of a small aircraft led him to a rare insight about the tenuous nature of earthly life.

With eight albums behind him and a string of #1 songs and awards that includes a Dove for "Best Praise Album of the Year", Denson's songs and messages to students from junior high through college continue to touch an ever-widening audience. In addition to his own performances, Al has been featured at crusades for Dr. Billy Graham, Franklin Graham, Ralph Bell, and Dawson McAllister. His new TV show, "The Al Denson Show", is seen by millions across America. The program targets and involves youth and the issues they face every day.

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# Defeat and Discouragement: The Deadly Duo

There are probably not two more deadly or effective weapons in Satan's arsenal than defeat and discouragement. They are twins and you seldom ever see them apart. It seems whenever defeat arrives on the scene that discouragement

is not far behind. These two pack a double punch that deprives us of our confidence and leaves us feeling hopeless. They are like contagious, deadly diseases that are common to everyone, and the bad news is that you can catch them over and over again.

The feelings that come with defeat and discouragement range from mild when we experience minor pressures and problems, to overwhelming when the pressures and problems get so great that they drain us physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. At that point we are left with no desire or strength to go on. The good news is that there is a future for those who fail, and help for those that are discouraged. These diseases don't have to be deadly. With a good dose of hope they are definitely curable.

Let's separate these two for a moment and look first at:

**I. DEFEAT.** This is the number one cause of discouragement. Nothing seems to discourage us like failing. We have high hopes and expectations for ourselves, and when we don't fulfill those expectations we tend to give in to discouragement.

What we don't realize many times is that there is a big difference between failing and being a failure. Failure is an event, not a person.

If you let yourself believe that you are a failure simply because you failed at something, discouragement will take over in your life. Failure is only a temporary setback, something from which to learn. God wants to use those times when you fail to reveal Himself and His power in your life.

There is a great story in Luke 5 that illustrates this point. Peter and his friends were professional fishermen, but they had been out on an

all-night fishing trip and had caught nothing. Their income and their families depended on their success but they had failed. They were tired and their defeat had left them discouraged.

Jesus comes along and tells Peter to "Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." In verse five Peter responds, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything." Do you sometimes feel like Peter? "Master, I've worked hard at that relationship, I've worked hard at school, I've worked hard to lose weight, or make the team, or love that enemy, or change my attitude, but it is no use. It hasn't worked. I'm getting nowhere. I've failed and I'll just fail again."

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# You must understand that whatever your area of failure, Jesus is right there in the boat with you.

Well, to Peter's credit he went on to say, "But, because You say so, I will let down the nets." The Bible says in Luke 5:6 that when they did that, they caught so many fish that their nets began to break. So what's my point? Simply this, God allows defeat and failure in our lives for a reason, and He wants to use them for good in our lives. There are things that we can learn through these two unpleasant things, that we could not learn any other way. What should we do when we feel defeated in life? Here are three things that will help:

**1. Acknowledge God's Presence.** Being aware of His presence with you at every moment, in every situation will dramatically change your attitude and your outlook. Peter realized that Jesus was in the boat with him and that the Lord cared about his problem. We all want to know that we are not alone and that someone understands what we are going through. Jesus can meet those two needs.

**2. Cooperate With God's Plan.** It would have been easy for Peter to have followed his intellect that day instead of Jesus. After all, he was a professional fisherman. He did have the best boat, the best nets and certainly all the knowledge and experience he needed to be a success. It made no sense intellectually to try again. It also would have been easy for Peter to have followed his feelings. He was tired and probably hungry from working all night. But, he listened to Jesus instead of his own intellect or feelings, and cooperated with His plan.

**3. Trust God's Promises.** Peter let down his net the second time in anticipation that something was going to happen. He didn't know what or how much, but he was expecting God to do something. There was no pressure on Peter the second time, no fear of failure, because he was not trusting in his own abilities, or his past performances. He was just simply trusting in the word he had gotten from the Lord.

Why do you think Jesus said to Peter, "Launch out into deep water." Well, of course we know that's where the big fish are, but maybe it was more than just that. Have you ever allowed yourself to get out into deep water with God? Let me explain.

Think about a typical day at the beach. Where are most of the people? On the beach of course, lying in the sun or playing in the sand. There is a smaller group walking along the edge of the water, just barely getting their feet wet. Then there is even a smaller group in the shallow water, and the fewest number of people at the beach are always found swimming in the deep water.

Most Christians live either on the beach or in the shallow waters of life. They simply exist on a superficial level. There is very little depth to their lives, because they are content just to play around with the things of God and never get out into deep water with Him.

The deep water symbolizes total commitment. You know sink or swim, do or die in deep water with God. Allowing yourself to get to the place in life where you know that if something is going to be done, God will have to do it. You must come to the place where you are willing to do business in deep water with God, because that is where life-changing miracles take place.

In verse ten Jesus said to Peter, "Don't be afraid..." What was Jesus warning him not to fear? Failure. Defeat. Maybe you feel that you have had more than your share of failure and defeat. If you will follow Peter's example, you find that all of that defeat can be a positive thing in your life, too. You must understand that whatever your area of failure, Jesus is right there in the boat with you. He is saying to you just as He said to Peter, "don't be afraid, I have a plan to work all things together for your good, and all I need is your cooperation and a willingness to get out into deep water with Me and do it My way."



# “Unresolved anger will freeze” your emotional maturity level

The other half of this potentially “Deadly Duo” is:

**II. Discouragement.** It is true that defeat is the main reason we get discouraged, but there are some other causes for discouragement as well. Let’s look briefly at a few:

- 1. Fatigue.** When you do not care for yourself physically as you should, you get worn out, physically exhausted and emotionally drained. When this occurs, you become a prime candidate for discouragement. Fatigue can be a major cause of discouragement.
- 2. Frustration.** No matter how far you have come in life, it’s easy to take your eyes off of what you have accomplished, and put them on what still needs to be done. If your life is full of the “junk” from your past (like yesterday’s guilt), you will never be who you want to be today. If you hold on to old habits and attitudes they will waste your time and consume your energy. All of this will cause frustration in your life and in your relationships, which will lead to discouragement.

**3. Fear.** The way you can tell if your discouragement is caused by fear, is if you have an intense, deep desire to run away from your problem, to escape. The natural reaction to fear is always to run. In life there are only three ways you can move when you have a problem: against it in anger, away from it in fear, or through it in faith. Discouragement can be a serious thing because when it isn’t dealt with properly there are two very destructive things that it can lead to in our lives:

- 1. Anger.** There is nothing that causes you to lose your perspective and quit caring about things that are really important like unresolved anger. We all get angry from time to time, and that’s O.K. and even emotionally healthy. But when you find yourself being angry all the time it is a signal that anger is becoming a problem in your life. Anger can take many different forms. Sometimes it is aggressive and explosive, while at other times it may be passive (“I don’t care”), detached (“it doesn’t matter”), or sarcastic. Unresolved resolved anger is like a videotape of past hurts that keeps playing over and over again in our minds. This keeps the pain fresh in our memories, and every time we mentally rewind that tape, our anger grows.

Unresolved anger is a CHOICE and it carries with it some destructive consequences:

- A. Problems in relationships.** People with unresolved anger in their lives have great difficulty letting people get close to them. Anger will impair your ability to give and receive love. It is extremely difficult to please a person who has unresolved anger, so relationships are always strained at best.
  - B. Emotional Immaturity.** Unresolved anger will “freeze” your emotional maturity level and cause you to respond more like an eight year old instead of an eighteen year old.
  - C. Addictive Behaviors.** People with unresolved anger are those most likely to become addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, food, work, etc... anything that will give them relief, even if it is temporary relief from the pain they carry inside.
  - D. Physical Problems.** Unresolved anger can cause backaches, headaches, neck pain, ulcers, stomach and digestive problems, as well as heart disease.
- Unresolved anger should not be taken lightly because the results can be very serious. What can you do about unresolved anger in your life? The antidote for anger is always forgiveness.

You may need to forgive yourself, or you may find that at the heart of your discouragement is someone else you may need to forgive. Forgiveness simply says, “I refuse to allow the actions or attitudes of another person to control my behavior and destroy my life.”

Some people mistakenly think that forgiveness is about setting the offender free, when forgiveness actually sets the one who has been offended free.

Unforgiveness is like a rope that keeps you tied to the past and to the one who has hurt you. Forgiveness releases you from the past and the offender.

Forgiveness is not a feeling, it is an act of the will, a CHOICE. Forgiveness is not about whether the other person deserves it, or has asked for it. If you wait until it is deserved or asked for, then it isn’t forgiveness at all. Forgiveness is a free gift that you give, but actually the one who benefits from the gift the most is the one who gives it. Forgiveness isn’t always easy, but forgiveness is the one thing that has the power to resolve your anger and release you from the hold it has on your life. To avoid discouragement in life you need to always be willing to forgive, knowing that you, too, one day will need the forgiveness of another.

# Focus on the facts, not your feelings.

We can't avoid anger completely, and some people will find anger more difficult to overcome than others do, but it can be done. Like everything else in our lives that is worthwhile, it is a CHOICE. Allowing yourself to stay discouraged can also lead to:

2. **Depression.** Everyone gets depressed at times, but left alone depression will cause you not to care about the things that would normally be very important to you. As a result, when you are depressed it is easy not to care about your convictions and begin to let things slide.



There are four things that you need to guard against when you find yourself depressed:

- A. Focusing on our feelings and not on the facts.** This is called "emotional reasoning". "I feel like it, so it must be true." That is a very destructive line of reasoning. Your feelings are HIGHLY unreliable. Feelings are important, but they are not to be trusted, and certainly should not be the basis for our decisions.
- B. Comparison.** This will always breed unhappiness and more depression. The only person you can be is you. If you try to be like someone other than who you are, you will be constantly depressed. When we get depressed, we usually try to motivate ourselves with criticism and condemnation, but these are no solution's for depression.
- C. Blaming ourselves for negative things that are not our fault.** When you assume responsibility for other people's actions and responses you assume a responsibility that is not yours. You can influence other people, but you cannot control them. Do not allow yourself to become depressed by what you can't control.
- D. Exaggerating the negative.** When we are depressed, we always tend to exaggerate the negative and make things out to be worse than they really are. We will easily become overwhelmed at that point with our problems.

Anger and depression are bad news and perhaps now you can see how dangerous it is to stay discouraged. So, what should you do when you find that you are discouraged? There are three things you can begin to do that should help you a great deal:

1. **Figure Out what is going on in your life.** Decide if the source of your discouragement is failure, fatigue, frustration, or fear. Once you know what you are really up against, deal with it honestly. Devise a new plan, a new approach. If you need help, ask for it. Go to your parents, your youth pastor, a counselor at school, or an adult that you admire. When you get discouraged it may mean that you are just doing the right thing the wrong way. Let someone help you reorganize your time, your priorities, or your schedule. Then allow someone you trust to hold you accountable to work your new plan. It is a CHOICE.

2. **Focus On the facts, not your feelings.** If you have allowed yourself to believe the lies Satan tells, then you must replace them with the truth of the Word of God. You must focus on verses like these, that remind you of:

God's Goodness and Love.  
Psalms 23:6, "Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life..."

God's Nearness.  
Hebrews 13:5, "...never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."

God's Power.  
Ephesians 1:19-20, "...His incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is just like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead..."

When you are discouraged you must force yourself with an act of your will to get your focus off of your feelings and your circumstances, and put it on the Lord. It is a CHOICE.

**3. Fight With all your might.** Resist the temptation to give in to negative, discouraging thoughts. The battleground for a Christian will always be the mind. That is where all the battles of life are either won or lost. God will do His part and supply the power we need to overcome discouragement, but we must do our part. Remember, your feelings will always follow your thoughts, so guard them well. It is a CHOICE.



It's good to know how to cure a disease after you get sick, but isn't it always better to do as much as you can to prevent the illness from occurring in the first place? The same is true for discouragement. You can't prevent all cases of discouragement, but there are some things that you can do to stay emotionally healthy and keep discouragement from being severe in your life. Here are a few:

- 1. Decide what your priorities are and make them your focus.** Can you say no to things that are good in life, in order to have the best? Other people will always try to divert you from your priorities. You and you alone must CHOOSE not to allow yourself to be distracted by less important things. Discouragement comes when you either have no priorities, or when you let interruptions keep you from concentrating on your priorities.
- 2. Ask for help before discouragement sets in.** You will rapidly become discouraged if you think everything depends on you. Even Jesus had twelve helpers. Realize that asking for, and accepting help is not a sign of weakness but of strength. If you have difficulty admitting that you need help, it is a sure sign that fear and insecurity are your real problem.

**3. Determine to only see things through God's eyes.** God sees things differently than we do because we see only a small piece of the puzzle while He sees the big picture. It's the difference between watching a parade from the sidewalk or from a helicopter. The only thing we can see from the curb is what is right in front of us at the moment. But, from the sky you can see the entire parade; the beginning, the middle and the end. Sometimes we get discouraged in life because we only see what is going on in our life at the moment. God sees how everything that happens to you fits and works together. The only way to get God's perspective on your life is to spend time alone with Him on a daily basis.

Perhaps you've detoured away from your priorities. Maybe you've become self-sufficient or lost your "heavenly" perspective about your life. If so, you will surely deal with discouragement on a regular basis. Jesus came to bring you peace and joy. Don't allow Satan to use defeat and discouragement to rob you of what is rightfully yours in Christ.

Defeat and discouragement happen to everyone. You may have to visit them from time to time, but you don't have to live with them. Remember, God wants to use even unpleasant things like these to draw you to Himself. When you make the CHOICE to run to Him with all your failure, pain and disappointment, He will take them and in return give you a new perspective and a fresh start.

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