

Remember This Vital Truth When You Face Discouragement This Year

A few days ago, it was the first chilly morning of the season. The welcomed cool made a peaceful early morning in our house. All was well.

I was propped up, perusing the headlines to see if anything had blown up in the night since I had last checked. Linda, however, was setting the better example.

Seated on the small couch in the corner of the kitchen, she had two different devotional books open to her right, while breaking in a new Bible on her lap.

As always, a pencil and highlighter pens were at close reach. Along with the steaming French Market coffee in her favorite flowery mug on the small table to the left, this was her morning happy place.

This special spot is next to four tall outside windows, bringing a great view of the morning breakfast routine of some frolicking squirrels, one skittish rabbit and a host of blue jays, sparrows and red birds that live nearby. Somebody keeps leaving treats in the yard, and the gang regularly shows up for the buffet.

Truly, an “ease into the day” moment.

Then, in the morning solitude, *bam!*

Although in separate rooms, the loud thud made both of us jump.

We had heard that sound a few times before, and knew what it was.

One of the birds, thinking it was moving in fast to meet up with a friend, crashed straight into one of the big windows.

My first thought was not happy. Over the last few years, we have had to replace three of those windows. They aren't cheap.

Linda checked the area of the crash and reported no window cracks, just a small splotch of feathers left on the glass. Most of the time the birds shake it off, and walk away rubbing their heads before groggily flying off.

But later, as she walked out to clean the window, we realized this one had not walked away. We were sad as we both looked down.

As I placed our lifeless feathered friend in the deep growth area behind the house, I lightly mumbled the proper words for the moment, "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away."

Then I casually blurted, "You know, the Lord knew that red bird! He knew its name. He knows the whole family." I got a sweet "Amen" from my wife, who then said, "Well, that's what the Word says, and we believe the Word!"

Throughout that day, the thought of that bird came back periodically. I knew it was just a bird. I had more important things to do. Why was it coming back to my mind?

Then, in an inner thud, I heard, "It's not about the bird. It's about you. It's about the Word."

Matthew 10 tells the story as He put the band together. The chapter starts by saying, "[Jesus] called His twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" (v. 1).

Well, that sounds like fun.

Then, He goes on to "read the fine print" as to what to expect

in the days ahead.

Some days will be exhilarating, some days discouraging. Some people will accept them; others will want to run them out of town. They will have betrayal in their future. They will be threatened. Some will see the inside of a jail.

Verses 19 and 20 gives the bad news/good news moment, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought of how or what you will speak. For it will be given you at that time what you will speak. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you."

Knowing they might likely get discouraged in the rough days ahead, He continues to speak faith to them (verses 28-31). "Do not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

Then, in a majestic revelation perspective, He takes a most minute part of creation to describe the depth of His loving concern that wraps all the way around us.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear. You are more valuable than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29-31).

To us, that morning, this simple illustration came to encourage us with a new emphasis on our well-known memory verse.

If He knew that red bird, He knows us. He sees us. He keeps us. He holds us. He's there.

So, in your dark, discouraging times. When you don't know what to say, the Holy Spirit will give you the words. When you're misunderstood or feel forgotten, you're not alone. He's always watching. He told us so.

“Well, that’s what the Word says, and we believe the Word!”
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Michael Green is pastor with his wife, Linda, at The LifeGate
() in Metairie and Mandeville, Louisiana. He is also a
speaker, singer, producer and writer. Find him on Twitter
(@MichaelGreen77).