

PASSING THE DISCOURAGEMENT TEST

SERMON TITLE: Passing The Discouragement Test

KEY TEXT (NKJV): Isaiah 61:3 NLT

OTHER TEXTS (NLT, NKJV): Romans 3:23-24, Romans 6:23, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 4:4, Philippians 4:13, Psalm 142:4-7, 1 Samuel 30:6, 2 Timothy 4:16, Hebrews 10:25

Big Idea: As believers, we will face moments of discouragement, but these moments are not meant to defeat us; they are opportunities to deepen our dependence on God. Just as David and Paul did, we learn that discouragement loses its power when we turn our focus from our circumstances to God's unchanging character. In our lowest moments, God invites us to strengthen ourselves in His Word, to remember that our righteousness and identity are found in Christ, and to keep walking by faith, even when our feelings say otherwise. As we choose to trust God's promises, speak His truth, and encourage others, we pass the discouragement test, turning trials into testimonies and bringing glory to God who planted us to stand firm like 'Oaks of righteousness' for His glory.

In this sermon, Rev. Tony Cooke encourages us to recognize discouragement as a spiritual test of faith and learn how to overcome it by trusting in God's strength, standing firm in His Word, and encouraging ourselves and others through His promises.

Isaiah 61:3 NLT

*To all who mourn in Israel,
He will give a crown of beauty for ashes,
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,
festive praise instead of despair.
In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks
that the Lord has planted for his own glory.*

God Bless You!

The Connection Groups Office

PASSING THE DISCOURAGEMENT TEST

Leader Heads-Up: Attendance is not just about numbers; it is about people. Celebrate with those who are there and look out for those who couldn't make it; reach out and remind them they still belong.

A. Start Talking: 2026 Outreach Planning

As a group, identify at least two Outreach community projects/activities for 2026, and plan dates for when your Zone can carry out each outreach activity.

B. Start Thinking

1. Read **1 Samuel 30:6 NKJV**. When you feel overwhelmed, what practical steps have you taken to 'encourage yourself in the Lord'? How will you cultivate this habit daily so that discouragement does not overwhelm your heart?
2. Read **Isaiah 61:3 NLT**. What ashes or painful experiences in your life has God turned (or is turning) into something beautiful? How will remembering His faithfulness in your past help you stay encouraged during current struggles?
3. Read **2 Corinthians 7:5-7 NLT**. Share who has been a 'Titus' in your life, someone whose presence brought encouragement just when you needed it? How will you be intentional this week to be a 'Titus' to someone else who may be struggling silently?

C. Start Praying (Pray as a group during the meeting)

1. **Group Prayer:** Pray that the Lord will strengthen you in the face of discouragement and teach you to speak His Word with faith and find refuge in His presence (**1 Samuel 30:6 NLT**).
2. **Pray for the Church: We Value Excellence**
As a church, we believe that truly valuing people is demonstrated through serving and performing with excellence. Therefore, we commit to serving with punctuality, quality, precision, and diligence. We also believe that excellence begins at a personal level; each individual should strive to set a standard and be a living example of God's Kingdom to those around them. (**Matthew 5:14-16, 1 and Corinthians 10:31-33**)

D. Start Doing

1. **Choose** to strengthen yourself in the Lord when discouragement comes instead of allowing negative emotions to take control and remind yourself daily that God is your refuge and portion.
2. **Speak** God's Word over your situation when you feel weary or defeated, declare His promises aloud to shift your focus from the problem to His power.
3. **Reflect** on God's grace and mercy when you are tempted to feel unworthy. Remember that your righteousness is not earned, but received through Christ, and live confidently in that truth.
4. **Encourage** and stand with others who are facing their own 'discouragement test', offering words of faith, prayer, and presence just as you would want support in your own trials.

Help us spread the word! Share this link with MLFC members in your network who have not yet joined a group: <https://miraclelifefamily.churchcenter.com/groups>.

Members, please ensure your CG leader takes your attendance before the end of the meeting.

Leader Report Reminder: <https://miraclelifefamily.churchcenter.com/people/forms/604025>

School For Life: Sign up via <https://miraclelifefamily.churchcenter.com/registrations>