



Part 1: Look Up to God

Isaiah 40:25-31

Our first response in discouragement is to look up to the Lord.

I. The fight against discouragement is the fight of faith.

We all battle discouragement ... the last two years have brought waves of circumstances that drain our joy, faith, and hope: pandemic, strain on relationships, losses of friends, jobs, health, school, fear of politics of the left or right...polarization...

“...I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.” Philippians 1:25-26

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good profession...” 1 Timothy 6:12

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...” 2 Timothy 4:7

The fight against discouragement is part of the fight of faith and the fight for our joy in the Lord. It’s the fight to keep hope in the Lord alive in our hearts.

II. The challenge of discouragement (Psalm 137; Isaiah 40:27).

A. Historical context (Psalm 137:1-4).

The deportation of the Jewish people to Babylon took place in two stages between 605 and 587 BC. God’s message through His prophets was to warn His people of the consequences of their sin and call them to repent (Isaiah 1-

39). His message starting in Isaiah 40 was a message of comfort and the promise of restoration and return to their homeland.

B. Recognizing the lies we believe (Isaiah 40:27).

“Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God?’” Isaiah 40:27

God doesn’t care about me...

The lies we believe tempt us to discouragement, hopelessness, self-pity, anger (see Psalm 137:8-9).

III. Fighting discouragement/fighting for joy and hope.

A. Look up to God (Isaiah 40:25-26).

“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal, says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens...”
Isaiah 40:25-26

Our first act in fighting discouragement is to look up and meditate on the Lord’s majesty and sovereign power (see Isaiah 40:12-26).

As we meditate on the Lord’s majesty and sovereign power, we also consider His steadfast love to us (Isaiah 40:1-2, 10-11). The good news of the payment of their sin was pointing to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, which was pointing to Jesus Christ.

B. Remember the Lord’s promises to you (Isaiah 40:28-31).

“The glory of God is not just, or even essentially, His power, but His servanthood; the fact is that no one and nothing is too small to be important to Him or worthy of His attention and care. He is not only strong in Himself, but He gives strength to the weary.” – Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*

C. Search your heart (Psalm 51:6,10, 12; 139:23-24).

God’s covenant people were in exile due to years of unrepentant sin and folly. It’s wise for us to ask the Lord to search our hearts and lives. Are we in this discouraging circumstance due to our foolishness or sin, or is this just our life under God’s providence?

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

Andrew Murray's "Formula for Trial"

1. *He brought me here. It's by His will I am in this straight place. In that fact I will rest.*
2. *He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child.*
3. *Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends for me to learn.*
4. *In His good time, He will bring me out again – how and when only He knows. So let me say: I am (1) here by God's appointment, (2) in His keeping, (3) under His training, and (4) for His time.*

IV. Hoping in the Lord as we wait on Him (Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 27:13-14).

"I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." Psalm 27:13-14

Discipleship Questions/Actions:

1. What has been your experience with discouragement? What strategies have you tried to fight against discouragement and in favor of joy?
2. Read Psalm 137 and Isaiah 40:27. Can you relate to anything expressed in these scriptures? Have you experienced times when you were tempted towards hopelessness, self-pity, or anger because of your circumstances?
3. Consider the three actions recommended to fight discouragement and fight for joy and hope. What is your response to these? Have you ever tried them?
4. Recommended action: Meditate on Isaiah 40:25-31 for 1-2 weeks and journal your thoughts. Is there anything the Holy Spirit is showing you? Consider memorizing these verses to help you fight discouragement moving forward.