

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide:

Overcoming Discouragement

Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: April 14, 2024

Introduction:

In this sermon, Pastor Keith Jenkins revisited the events following Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, focusing on how Jesus restored the faith and hope of his disciples. He emphasized that Jesus' death was not what anyone expected, and the disciples needed Jesus to resurrect their faith, hopes, and dreams. Pastor Keith explored the ways in which Jesus meets us in our discouragement and uncertainty, drawing parallels to our own lives and struggles.

1. Jesus Meets Us Wherever We Are

Pastor Keith noted that nothing stops Jesus from entering the story of our lives, even when we are hiding behind locked doors of fear, as the disciples were after Jesus' crucifixion. He emphasized that Jesus is a liberator who takes the initiative to close the gap between us and Him, showing up in our lives even when we don't recognize Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Share a time when you felt like God was far away during a difficult situation. How did you eventually see God's presence in that circumstance?
2. How can we become more attuned to recognizing God's presence in our daily lives, even in the midst of uncertainty or fear?

Supporting Verses:

John 20:19 - "When it was evening on the first day of the week, Jesus' followers were together. The doors were locked, because they were afraid of the elders. Then Jesus came and stood right in the middle of them."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: The disciples were hiding in fear after Jesus' crucifixion, uncertain about their future and the implications of following Jesus.
- Theological Significance: Jesus' appearance to the disciples demonstrates His faithfulness to meet us in our fears and doubts, offering His presence and peace.
- Application: We can trust that Jesus will meet us in our lowest moments, even when we feel

isolated or afraid.

2. Jesus Gives Us Encouragement

Pastor Keith highlighted how Jesus always lifts our heads and calms us down, assuring us that He has everything under control. He noted that Jesus did not scold or shame the disciples for abandoning Him but instead offered them peace and understanding.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you experienced Jesus' peace in a challenging situation?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus did not reprimand the disciples for their shortcomings? What does this reveal about His character?

Supporting Verses:

John 20:19b - "Then Jesus came and stood right in the middle of them and said, 'Peace be with you.'"

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: "Peace be with you" was a common greeting, but Jesus' words carried a deeper meaning of spiritual peace and restoration.
 - Theological Significance: Jesus, as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), offers a peace that surpasses understanding, even in the midst of turmoil.
 - Application: We can find encouragement in knowing that Jesus understands our weaknesses and offers us peace and grace rather than condemnation.
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3. Jesus Shows Us His Love

Pastor Keith emphasized that Jesus' wounds demonstrate His love for us individually. He pointed out that we must experience Jesus' love firsthand, not just have an intellectual understanding of it.

Discussion Questions:

1. How has your understanding of Jesus' love for you grown over time?
2. In what ways can we authentically share the love of Christ with others, even in our own weakness and brokenness?

Supporting Verses:

John 20:20 - "After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. His followers were thrilled when they saw the Lord."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Jesus' wounds were tangible evidence of His death and resurrection, confirming His identity to the disciples.
 - Theological Significance: Jesus' willingness to suffer and die for us demonstrates the depth of His love and the extent to which He was willing to go to reconcile us to God.
 - Application: We can find comfort and assurance in the love of Christ, which was demonstrated through His sacrifice on the cross.
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4. Jesus Gives Us a Reason to Endure

Pastor Keith stressed that there is always purpose in the pain we experience and that God can use even the most difficult circumstances for His glory and to restore His image in us. He reminded us that our lives have an Author and Finisher who is not done with our story yet.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you seen God use a painful experience in your life for a greater purpose?
2. What does it mean to you to know that God is the Author and Finisher of your life story?

Supporting Verses:

John 20:21 - "Then Jesus said again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, I now send you.'"

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Jesus commissioned His disciples to continue His mission of spreading the gospel message.
 - Theological Significance: Jesus' words remind us that our lives have purpose and that we are called to participate in God's redemptive work in the world.
 - Application: We can find strength to endure difficult times by remembering that God has a purpose for our lives and that He can use even our pain and struggles for His glory.
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5. Jesus Fills Us with His Presence and Power

Pastor Keith explained that as believers, we are spiritual beings who live in physical bodies, and we need the power of the Holy Spirit to be effective witnesses and servants of Christ. He emphasized that we must be willing to acknowledge our weakness and depend on God's

strength.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?
2. What are some areas in your life where you need to rely more on God's strength rather than your own?

Supporting Verses:

John 20:22 - "After he said this, he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Jesus' breathing on the disciples and imparting the Holy Spirit was a symbolic act, foreshadowing the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.
 - Theological Significance: The Holy Spirit empowers believers to live out their faith and be effective witnesses for Christ.
 - Application: We can experience the fullness of life in Christ by relying on the Holy Spirit's presence and power in our daily lives.
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6. Jesus Helps Us to Believe

Pastor Keith highlighted the story of doubting Thomas, emphasizing that Jesus did not condemn Thomas for his doubts but instead graciously met him where he was and helped him believe. He encouraged the congregation to be honest with their doubts and fears, trusting that Jesus can handle their questions and uncertainties.

Discussion Questions:

1. How has Jesus met you in your doubts and helped you to believe?
2. Why is it important to create a safe space for people to express their doubts and ask questions about faith?

Supporting Verses:

John 20:27-29 - "Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'"

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Thomas' doubt was a natural human response to the extraordinary news of Jesus' resurrection.

- Theological Significance: Jesus' interaction with Thomas demonstrates His patience and understanding with our doubts and His willingness to meet us where we are in our faith journey.
 - Application: We can bring our doubts and questions to Jesus, trusting that He will help us to believe and grow in our faith.
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Conclusion:

Pastor Keith's message on how Jesus restored the faith and hope of His disciples serves as a powerful reminder that Jesus meets us in our discouragement, fear, and doubt. Through His presence, love, and power, Jesus gives us the strength to endure, the courage to believe, and the purpose to press on in our faith journey. As we face the challenges and uncertainties of life, may we cling to the truth that Jesus is with us every step of the way, offering us peace, encouragement, and the hope of abundant life in Him.

Reflection Questions:

1. In what areas of your life do you need to experience the peace and presence of Jesus today?
 2. How can you cultivate a deeper awareness of Jesus' love for you, and how can you share that love with others?
 3. What steps can you take this week to rely more fully on the power of the Holy Spirit in your daily life?
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Prayer Requests:

[Share any personal prayer requests, and pray over the week ahead]

References:

Primary Sources:

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Collaborative Contributions:

LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon notes and biblical passages.

LLM Training Data:

LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to September 2023.