

Encourage One Another

I Thessalonians 5:11

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Encouragement is a vital and key component of our relationship with one another.
 - A. George M. Adams (U.S. Representative, KY; 1867-1875) said, “Encouragement is oxygen for the soul.”
 - B. Another (Celeste Holm) said, “We live by encouragement and die without it - slowly, sadly and angrily.”
 - C. “A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success.” —Unknown
2. There is not a single person, regardless of how strong they may be physically, emotionally and spiritually that doesn't need encouragement from time-to-time.
3. **3** Let's look at encouragement, so we can all become better at giving encouragement to others.

II. DISCUSSION:

As we consider encouragement, it's an absolute truth that:

1. **4** Everyone needs encouragement:
 - A. Some put on airs they are so strong that they don't need encouragement, but it's not true; we all need encouragement!
 - (1) It is true some are naturally more upbeat and positive than others, yet they too, need encouragement.
 - (2) While others seem to be more susceptible to becoming discouraged and dejected (“encouragement sponges”).
 - (3) But we all need some encouragement; and we all need to be encouragers.
 - B. Some carry a greater weight of difficulties in this life than others; some have a greater burden of responsibility than others.
 - C. A few are so busy encouraging others, their own bucket runs empty; and they too need encouragement.
 - D. If we're really paying attention; it's easy to see those who need encouragement.
 - (1) The young/weak in faith need it to keep going.
 - (2) Those going through tough times need it.
 - (3) There are those dealing with long term health issues, or the difficulties of old age, that need encouragement.
 - (4) There are families with broken hearts because some of their dear ones are prodigals who refuse the way of truth; they need encouragement.
 - (5) Even those who are pillars of spiritual strength need encouragement (**2 Cor. 1:8**: “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.”).
 - ☛ Preachers need encouragement.
 - ☛ Elders need encouragement.

- ☛ Brethren who seem to never have a care in the world need encouragement.
- E. There really isn't anyone that doesn't need it from time to time; so, we all need to be actively engaged in encouraging others.

1 Thess. 5:11: *“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”* (NIV)

- (1) So, one of the most important activities we engage in as Christians is mutual edification.
- (2) There is literally a dozen or more passages in the New Testament exhorting us to edify one another; which is simply another way of saying “encourage one another.”

Heb. 10:24-25: *“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another,”*

As we consider encouragement, encouragement lets others know:

2. **5** They are not alone:

- A. Loneliness can be one of the catastrophic results of discouragement.
- (1) When a person feels alone; problems seem much greater; nights seem nearly endless.
 - (2) Thoughts begin to fill the heart that no one cares (rare; just unaware); not even God.
- Heb. 13:5:** *“For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”*
- (3) In such circumstances, we can feel alone in a church full of people.
 - (4) The darkness and loneliness of discouragement can crush the soul.
- B. Words of encouragement are nice; but often we need more than words; we need “presence,” we need others being physically there for us.
- (1) There's something really encouraging when feel all alone, but receive the undivided attention of someone who really cares.
 - (2) It doesn't take a “major production”: it can be something as simple as...
 - ☛ Sitting with a family in the surgery waiting room (Julie, Carpenters, Jan Worthy).
 - ☛ Showing up at the funeral home.
 - ☛ Taking food to a family/person in distress.
 - ☛ Inviting a family/person over to the house for a meal.
 - ☛ Just stopping in for a few minutes to talk and pray with someone.
- C. Just think of how discouraged Job was:
- (1) He had lost all his servants and livestock (Job 1:16).
 - (2) He had lost all his children in one fell swoop (Job 1:18-19; Double Wow!!!).
 - (3) He was stricken *“with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself”* (Job 2:7).
 - (4) His wife told him *“Curse God and die!”* (Job 2:9)
- D. But his three friends came to *“mourn with him, and to comfort him”* (Job 2:11).
- (1) They didn't bring cards, flowers, or candy (nothing wrong with cards, flowers, candy).

- (2) They simply “sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw his grief was very great.” (Job 2:13)
- E. Just “being there”; even if words are not spoken can be the sound of encouragement.
- F. A key to encouragement is our fellowship; we are “fellows” (i.e., companions, comrades, associate) in this together.
- (1) We are brothers and sisters in Christ; with a “like precious faith” (2 Pet. 1:1).
- (2) We are inseparably linked heart-to-heart, arm-in-arm; as we mutually weather the storms of life.
- (3) Today may be your turn to receive encouragement, tomorrow my turn.
- G. Even if we are not physically together; we can phone, send a text, an e-mail, a card; just let others know we are thinking of them and praying for them (**Heb. 3:18**: “Pray for us...”; **2 Cor. 1:11**: “...you also helping together in prayer for us...”; **Col. 1:9**: “...do not cease to pray for you”; **Jas. 5:16**: “...pray for one another... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”).

As we consider encouragement, encouragement is:

3. 6 Soul strengthening:

- A. True encouragement is more than cute sayings and quotes cross stitched on a pillow.
- (1) The kind of encouragement we should give, and desire in return, emanates from Christ and His word.
- (2) Such encouragement reminds us the ultimate encourager is our Lord and Savior.
- Phil. 2:1-4**: “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”
- (3) True encouragement reminds us God and His promises are the ultimate source of consolation.
- 2 Thess. 2:16-17**: “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”
- Heb. 6:17-20**: “Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”
- (4) True encouragement is much more than encouraging others to have a brighter outlook, it’s sharing God’s Word and blessings through prayer and exhortation.
- 2 Cor. 1:3-4**: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

- (5) Encouragement is not just creating an atmosphere of optimism, it's helping someone on their spiritual journey (Isa. 35:3-10).

Gal. 6:1-3: *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”*

Heb. 12:12-13: *“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.”*

- B. Encouragement is about helping others stay in the spiritual fight; not giving up, on God, His Word, or His people.

- (1) Striving to keep and show that spirit is infectious!
- (2) It helps our brethren realize God is greater than our problems.
- (3) It helps our brethren realize our problems are only temporary; they stay on this side of eternity.
- (4) Such an example helps all keep the vicissitudes of life in their proper perspective and in their proportion.

2 Cor 4:16-5:1: *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*

- (5) Encouragement is spiritual; it's helping someone get stronger in their faith and more dedicated in their commitment to the Lord; encouragement is Bible based.

Josh. 1:9: *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Rom. 8:31-32: *“If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”*

Eph. 3:20: *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”*

As we consider encouragement:

4. 7 Some are better at than others:

- A. Some seem to have a gift when it comes to encouraging others.

- (1) They just naturally know what to say, what do to and when to say and when to do it.
- (2) Some can lift the darkest spirit and find ways to pump oxygen back into that soul.
- (3) Others of us must learn, watch and develop as encouragers; but we can all do it.
- (4) We must strive to develop our sensitivities (i.e., spiritual radar) as it concerns empathy (i.e., identify with the thoughts, feelings and circumstances of others).

- (5) It involves learning when we've said enough; when it may be better to be silent (**Prov. 25:11**: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."; **Prov. 17:27**: "He who has knowledge spares his words...").
- (6) It involves learning what Scriptures are helpful to use in different situations.
- B. All of this comes from simply being encouraged ourselves by learning to encourage others (positive feedback loop).
- C. It involves knowing what worked for you when you needed encouragement. What did others do for you that really helped you? Maybe it would work for others.
- D. It involves knowing there is a time and a place for encouragement.
- (1) Often, the church building isn't the place; too many people; not the right atmosphere.
 - (2) A smile; a hug; a 'it's great to see you,' that works well in the church house.
 - (3) But later, one-on-one, in the person's home; might be a better setting to really support, comfort, encourage and help someone.
- E. Empathy means "walking in the other fellow's shoes"; not being overly judgmental.
- (1) When a person is hurting, they don't need a sermon.
 - (2) If it is sin that is the cause of their pain and loneliness; they need correction, but not condemnation (**Gal. 6:1-2**: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.").
 - (3) When Elijah was in the cave (1 Kgs. 19), hiding and scared:
 - ☛ There was a "great and strong wind" that "tore into the mountain and broke the rocks to pieces" (v. 11), "but the LORD was not in the wind";
 - ☛ There was "an earthquake," "but the LORD was not in the earthquake" (vv. 11-12);
 - ☛ There "a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire" (v. 12)
 - ☛ But then came "a still small voice" (v. 12); and the Lord spoke to Elijah.
 - ☛ He didn't condemn the prophet; He didn't scold him; He didn't preach to him.
 - ☛ He encouraged him; He reminded him; He helped him.
 - (4) Often, the backseat driver in us says, "You should have done this instead..."
 - ☛ Well, that's a little late now; here we are; we have to deal w/the current situation.
 - ☛ We must deal with the situation that is before us.
 - ☛ The blame game only adds more guilt and tends to block communication.
 - ☛ It doesn't lift the soul; it doesn't breathe oxygen into a discourage heart.
 - ☛ There is a time for the "you need to learn lessons from this," but we must pick the right time.
 - ☛ Now is the time to get a person back where they need to be; they may be embarrassed; ashamed; discouraged and wanting to quit.
 - ☛ Now is the time to reach out, as the Lord did to Elijah, as Jesus did to the sinking Peter (Matt. 14:29-33).
 - (5) The person in need would be better served, and more likely encouraged, if we reached out our hand and pulled them up rather than reminding them of their foolishness or sin.

As we consider encouragement; we need to remember:

5. **8** *We are encouraged in different ways:*

- A. For some it may be as simple as:
 - (1) Telling them to just take a day off and get some rest (That's hard for some of us!).
 - (2) Letting them know we "are there"; we care and we are praying for them.
- B. For others, it may take more; it may involve hours of visiting and working with them.
 - (1) Some just need a gentle reminder; some need loads of help.
 - (2) Some need just a little; others need a lot.
- C. We are all different; our problems are different; our faith is not at the same place.
- D. The effective encourager understands this: Each person doesn't respond to the same means of encouragement; one size doesn't fit all.
 - (1) Ask those closer to the person and the situation what might or might not work.
 - (2) In serious situations it is important not to rush in blindly without knowing all the circumstances (It may make matters worse!).
 - (3) Sometimes you may have to wait; sometimes it may be better to have someone else take the initiative.

III. CONCLUSION: 9

- I. Encouragement is a rare commodity; the world doesn't provide much. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we should be in the encouragement business!
 - A. No brother or sister should be alone:
 - ☛ When their loved one is laying in the casket at the funeral home.
 - ☛ When their loved one is on the operating table.
 - ☛ When any tragedy or difficult circumstance befalls them.
 - ☛ When they are scared, uncertain, and their faith is wavering.
 - B. Every child of God has a built-in support system; a church family that is there for them.
 - C. Brother and sisters are linked arm in arm by our common faith and common journey.
 - D. We have each other's back; we will not leave any one alone and afraid.
 - E. Our congregation should be a great source of warmth, hope, love and encouragement.
 - F. That's what makes the fellowship Christians have with one another so special.
 - G. The closer a church becomes, the greater the help and the encouragement (Heb. 10:24-25).
- 2. Let's read the passage selected as the text for our lesson one more time:
 - I Thess. 5:11:** *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." (NIV)*
 - A. Note the verse ends, *"just as in fact you also are doing."*
 - B. The Thessalonians brethren were in the encouragement business.
 - C. They were doing exactly what Christians are supposed to do.
 - D. Paul was encouraging them: "You're doing it. Keep it up! It's making a difference! Don't give up! Don't get weary in well-doing!"

3. We need encouragers! Can you be one?

Adapted from an article (**Jump Start # 1959**) by Roger Shouse.