

Encouragement
XSI 2016
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I Thessalonians 5:14: "...encourage the fainthearted...."

Why study encouragement?

- "... command to encourage one another is the one most often used in the NT letters as a primary way to love one another.." Gary Delashmutt, *Loving God's Way*, (*Grand Rapids: Kregel Resources*, 1996) p. 41.

- We all need and have benefited from encouragement
- God uses human agency

2 Cor. 7:5 &6: "Even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. But God who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

- Key to healthy atmosphere in community

What is encouragement?

Words and deeds designed to influence and strengthen people to keep pursuing God's will for their lives.

Words are powerful:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Prov. 18:21)

Good words can make an anxious heart glad (Prov. 12:25).

A soothing tongue is a tree of life (Prov. 15:4).

Pleasant words are...sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (Prov. 16:24).

Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances (Prov. 25:11).

What are encouraging words?

Eph. 4:29: "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Encouraging words are spoken for the good of the other and directed to the need of the moment.

Words are often not spoken for the good of another

- Self-centered motivation
- Withholding encouraging words

Proverbs 3:27 &28: Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
When it is in your power to do *it*.

²⁸Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give *it*,"
When you have it with you.

Exs: Barnabas and Paul; Jonathan and David (I Samuel 23:16,17)

I Samuel 23: 16, 17: And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. ¹⁷ Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also."

How do we live for the good of another?

Because Christ has lived a life for our good

- Romans 8:32: He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Motivation is key for effective encouragement

To meet the need of the moment

Example of Paul in Thessalonians

- I Thes 4:18: "Therefore encourage one another with these words." (NIV)
- I Thes. 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."

How do I discern the need of the moment?

- Pray

- Learn to listen.

"A person committed to the ministry of encouragement, must *listen*. Rather than thinking through his response while others speaks, he will be listening. Active listening requires concentrated effort. It notices facial grimaces, slumped shoulders, quiet sighs, lifeless tones of voice, and moist eyes." Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr and Dan B. Allender, *Encouragement*, (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids Michigan, 1984), pgs. 99, 100.

Why is it so hard to listen?

- We like to talk

"Researchers found that human beings can listen at least three times faster than they can talk. This suggests that we can daydream, plan our week's menu, hum a favorite tune, and still "listen" to our neighbor's chatter." *Encouragement*, p. 15.

- Biggest barrier in listening: yourself
 - Self-absorbed conversation
 - Attitude of self-importance
 - Relational passivity
- Learned skill
 - www.xenos.org/counseling/listening
- Often listening well is encouraging in itself

Different types of encouragement.

- Expressing gratitude for them, love of them and prayers for them (I Thess. 1:2; 3:13)
- 1:2 - We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers....;

3:12 - and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we do for you.

- Praising them for their past deeds, faithfulness and positive responses (I Thess. 1:3; 2:14)

1:3 - We give thanks to God...constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in the presence of our God and Father...

2:14 - For you brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you endured the same sufferings at the hand of your own

- Expressing to them our boasting about them (2 Thess.1: 3, 4)

2 Thess. 1:3,4 - We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows even greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

- Willingness to Challenge (I Thess. 4:1,10)

I Thess. 4:1,10: Finally, then brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.

How to become more effective at encouragement

- Recognize it will be costly
- Receive encouragement from the Lord

Romans 15:5: "Now may the God who gives you perseverance and encouragement..."

- Make it a goal when with others
- Pray
- Study Paul's letters
- Watch those around you
- Practice