

Encourage One Another

Sunday 30th October 2022

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Intro. Story: Playing football when younger.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

(1Th 5:11, NIV)

We are in a wonderful One Another series. My message for today is encourage one another. There are many ways to encourage one another from acts of kindness, visiting someone in need, giving of gifts or inviting others for a meal. However, I want to focus today on the use of our words to follow God’s instruction to encourage one another. Words have incredible power. The power of life and death is in the tongue. Our tongues and words have incredible power to do great good or great damage. Today I want to focus on encouraging one another using carefully chosen words. This includes other Christians and others that you come into contact with on a daily basis from people at the checkout, people who you bump into walking the dog to work colleagues to the people you care for or use your services. Larry Crabb says:

“A well-timed word has the power to urge a runner to finish the race, to rekindle hope when despair has set in, to spark a bit of warmth in an otherwise cold life, to trigger healthful self-evaluation in people who don’t think much about their shortcomings, to renew confidence when problems have the upper hand.”¹

The carefully chosen words aim to influence another to growing in their faith and becoming more like Jesus. That’s the goal. Or for those of no faith to grow more into their true identity. To grow the image of God they were created in and are called back to. Larry Crabb says the word used for encouragement means literally:

“to stir up, to provoke, to incite people in a given direction.” Verbal encouragement includes the idea of one person’s joining someone else on a journey and speaking words that encourage the traveler to keep pressing on despite obstacles and fatigue...

A simply worded definition of encouragement might be this: Encouragement is the kind of expression that helps someone want to be a better Christian, even when life is rough.”²

Our words are incredibly powerful. Proverbs teaches us that our tongues and words can be a fountain of life, like choice silver, bring healing, soothing, a tree of life and

¹ Crabb, Larry; Allender, PLLC, Dan B.. Encouragement . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

² Crabb, Larry; Allender, PLLC, Dan B.. Encouragement . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

the power of life. ³ But read the other half of the proverbs and we can see our tongues and words can also; be of little value, recklessly pierce like swords, be perverse and crush the spirit and bring death.

So, there's incredible power in carefully chosen words to encourage one another. They are incredibly valuable, a fountain that brings life, healing and soothing to souls which are afraid, hurting and discouraged. There is power in these encouraging words to stir up, to provoke, and incite them in a direction towards Jesus and becoming more like him. Here's an example from Larry Crabb:

“A short time later, our church celebrated the Lord’s supper in a Sunday morning worship service. It was customary in our congregation to encourage young men to enter into the privilege of worship by standing and praying aloud. That particular Sunday I sensed the pressure of the saints (not, I fear, the leading of the Spirit), and I responded by unsteadily leaving my chair, for the first time, with the intention of praying. Filled less with worship than with nervousness, I found my theology becoming confused to the point of heresy. I remember thanking the Father for hanging on the cross and praising Christ for triumphantly bringing the Spirit from the grave. Stuttering throughout, I finally thought of the word Amen (perhaps the first evidence of the Spirit’s leading), said it, and sat down. I recall staring at the floor, too embarrassed to look around, and solemnly vowing never again to pray or speak aloud in front of a group. Two strikes were enough. When the service was over, I darted toward the door, not wishing to encounter an elder who might feel obliged to correct my twisted theology. But I was not quick enough. An older Christian man named Jim Dunbar intercepted me, put his arm on my shoulder, and cleared his throat to speak. I remember thinking to myself, “Here it comes. Oh well, just endure it and then get to the car.” I then listened to this godly gentleman speak words that I can repeat verbatim today, more than twenty years later. “Larry,” he said, “there’s one thing I want you to know. Whatever you do for the Lord, I’m behind you one thousand percent.” Then he walked away. Even as I write these words, my eyes fill with tears. I have yet to tell that story to an audience without at least mildly choking. Those words were life words.”⁴

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen”
(Ephesians 4:29).

³ “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.” (Proverbs 10:11) “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.” (Proverbs 10:20) “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Proverbs 12:18) “The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.” (Proverbs 15:4) “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Proverbs 18:21)

⁴ — Encouragement: The Unexpected Power of Building Others Up by Larry Crabb, Allender, PLLC, Dan B.
<https://amzn.eu/OK0SyNN>

“And never let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth, but instead let your words become beautiful gifts that encourage others; do this by speaking words of grace to help them.” (Eph 4:29, TPT)

This verse seems incredibly simple yet it’s incredibly powerful and needed for unity and healthy relationships. This verse shows that EVERY WORD OUT OUR MOUTHS should be used to encourage one another, build others up and benefit those who listen. In fact, the word ONLY is significant. ONLY let words out of your mouth which build others up. If it doesn’t help build others up then it will not benefit those who will listen and its unwholesome talk.

ASK and THINK before you speak:

- Is what I am about to say helpful?
- Does what I am about to say build up or tear down?
- Will my words benefit the listener or be a hindrance?

This is Christian maturity. One who has learned to tame the tongue which is compared to a tiny rudder steering a whole massive ship.⁵

According to their needs is important. Our words should be carefully chosen to build them up according to their needs. We need to know and understand their needs, fears and defences first by being involved enough with them. Then we can choose words wisely that bring life, build them up and benefit them. We share with them not only words but ourselves and God’s presence for where 2 or 3 are gathered? That’s encouraging one another. That’s valuing others above ourselves. That’s looking out to the interests of others above my own.⁶

And how should we encourage?

*“And you know how affectionately we treated each one of you, **like a loving father cares for his own children**. We comforted and encouraged you and challenged you to adopt a lifestyle worthy of God, who invites you into his kingdom and glory.”*
(1Th 2:11-12, TPT)

We should encourage affectionately, like a loving father cares for his own children. That is with gentleness, patience, love and an understanding of their fears and weakness. That’s passionately desiring, encouraging and challenging them to make healthy choices about their lifestyle that is not worldly but worthy of God. It’s seeing

⁵ “We all fail in many areas, but especially with our words. Yet if we’re able to bridle the words we say we are powerful enough to control ourselves in every way, and that means our character is mature and fully developed. Horses have bits and bridles in their mouths so that we can control and guide their large body. And the same with mighty ships, though they are massive and driven by fierce winds, yet they are steered by a tiny rudder at the direction of the person at the helm. And so the tongue is a small part of the body yet it carries great power! Just think of how a small flame can set a huge forest ablaze.” (Jas 3:2-5, TPT)

⁶ “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” (Php 2:3-4, NIV)

their weakness yet also seeing their full potential and the gold that exists within them.

Our Strength and Encouragement Comes From God

What if you are the one doing all the encouraging and not much is coming back at you? We must check our motives of why we encourage to ensure they are first and foremost pure.

I do think this verse applies to encouragement also: “whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” (2Co 9:6, **ESV**). Jesus said give and it will come back to you.⁷ These are taken out of context but I do think the more you get involved in the lives of others and encourage others the more you will find encouragement comes back to you. I invited a friend to a curry night and messaged him a small encouragement after. His reply was: “*I wished I said more about how great you are. Just trying to get whats in my head out of my mouth. Your a great brother. I’m enjoying learning. Have a great night bro your amazing.*” Words are powerful. Often when you encourage others you feel encouraged yourself and humbled and it comes back to you. When you start to feel some self-pity or start to wonder where are all the people encouraging you, look first at the plank in your own eye and ask: how involved am in in the life of others and encouraging others with my time, actions and words?

Larry Crabb says:

*“The ascended Savior, still incarnate and therefore able to relate to us in all our testings and trials, **calls us to a life of involvement in other people’s lives**. We are told to rejoice with rejoicers, weep with weepers, restore the unspiritual, admonish the unruly, strengthen the weak — in sum, by words and deeds encourage others to press on in their pursuit of holiness (Romans 12). The only motivation that will stir us to reach into others’ lives with encouragement is love. Our words must come from unfeigned, genuine love for God and people.”⁸*

We are called to a life of involvement in other people’s lives from a pure motive of love. It’s not possible to encourage one another with no involvement. You can’t encourage others when you are not aware of their needs, struggles and fears. Don’t wait on others getting involved in your life. Go and get involved. Get to know someone. Pick up a phone. Go for a walk or have a game of squash but get involved.

You may however sow lots of encouragement and still receive not much in return. That is a good place to be however. Because it should move us towards God who is the ultimate source of our encouragement, comfort and strength. When we are so full of the love of God, His comfort and encouragement then we can let that river of love, comfort and encouragement flow out to others. We need to create healthy

⁷ “give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luk 6:38, **ESV**)

⁸ Crabb, Larry; Allender, PLLC, Dan B.. Encouragement . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

spiritual practices in our lives that let us find union with God, the source of all our encouragement and strength.⁹

*“May the **God of endurance and encouragement** grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

(Rom 15:5-6, ESV)

He is a God of encouragement. This causes Him to speak words of love and encouragement to us that compel us to move towards Him and become more like Him. As children created in His image, He calls us also to be people of encouragement that speak words of love and encouragement to others that compel them to draw closer to Him and become more like Him.

Encouraging one another is not first and foremost a set of skills. Yes, communication skills are important and necessary and can be learned and improved. We can become better communicators encouragers with our words. We can grow in the gift of prophecy which is powerful to encourage others:

“But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.”

(1Co 14:3, NIV)

We should eagerly desire this gift of prophecy that we may love and encourage others. But even if you have the gift of prophecy and massive faith but do not have love, you are nothing.¹⁰

Before and above all this our words flow from our hearts. The state of our heart is where encouragement flows from. Hearts that have been healed, softened and changed by His love and by His Word are encouraged hearts. This comes from hearing His voice, repentance and transformation leading to a heart that is growing in humility, compassion, love and spiritual sensitivity. **An encouraged heart produces an encouraging mouth.** Why? Words flow from the heart. For from the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Learning new skills and learning new gifts will be powerless from a hurting, fearful and discouraged heart. Yet a healed, loved and encouraged heart will flow and bring life and words of choice silver and bring soothing and a healing river of encouraging words flowing powerfully leading people closer to God and transformation.

Your homework is this.

⁹ “If, during our moments of deepest loneliness, we abandon ourselves completely to God, depending on him to minister to us, we will meet God. Our deepest parts will be strengthened; our character will become rooted in his resources. We will then be enabled to continue with our commitment to minister, motivated by our time spent in his presence. Our words will be words of giving, overflowing with the love he has made known to us. Our words will have the power to encourage.”

Crabb, Larry; Allender, PLLC, Dan B.. Encouragement . Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ “If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” **(1Co 13:2, NIV)**

Let's pray and ask God for a name or face of a person who he wants you to encourage. Next go and buy a nice card (and thoughtful gift if you can) in next 7 days. Pray and ask God for a Bible verse or story to encourage that person. Write a card to encourage them. Things you can think about and include:

- Thank them. Articulate your gratitude for what they mean to you or have done for you
- Highlight their strengths. Think of what their strengths are and put it into words. Tell them what you see their strengths are.
- What they mean to you. Put into words how much this person means to you.
- Speak hope and life. Think about a fear they may have. Don't mention the fear just write words of hope and life into that fear. For example if they may have financial fears you could write something like: "I know these are terribly financially difficult days. In difficult times I know that God is with me and will provide for me and not let me drown. A Bible verse I have found helpful to focus on has been I know God will provide for you, is faithful and will never let you down as you continue to trust Him."
- Pray for them. Before you write pray specifically for the person and ask for God to give you words for that person. Then tell the person you have prayed for them and will continue to do so.
- Spur them on. Have a vision of the call and purpose God has for that person and think of words that will spur them on to be all God has called them to be and do. They may not be able to see their own potential so tell them what you see. "I see in you...." For example. "I see in you a beautiful and gifted heart that is compassionate, caring and gentle. These are gifts from God that have blessed so many people. I know God has given you these gifts and has many more people ahead that will be touched deeply, strengthened and encouraged as you interact with them on a daily basis. I know the people you meet every day in your work are greatly blessed by the gifts God has given to you and you are a river of blessing to all that walk into your river of blessing."

I once did this for my mother and wrote her a card. I sent it with my bronze medallion. I wrote a lot of words but finished with these:

"I want you to have this medal I received. It is my bronze medallion for lifesaving that I received in December 1996. I give it to you because you deserve the medal for lifesaving. Raising a son in love and affirmation has rescued me from insecurity, fears and self-destruction. Discipling your children is the best gift you can give them and saves them from many evils. Thank you mum and well done. Love your son.
Aaron."

Is encouragement powerful. Well here was my mum's response to that card:

"It made me think maybe I did better than I thought as a mum ,I felt so loved and valued the encouragement went very deep I would cry every time I read it something I would treasure for ever hence I was able to go straight to it when asked ."

Elma Dowds. 29th October 2022.

