Encouraging One Another

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11  | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Psalm 32:8 | Matthew 26:36-38 | Mark 10:46-48

SUMMARY

Some Christians freely give of themselves to others.

People enjoy being around them because they are always ready with an encouraging word. Other Christians consider themselves islands of self-sufficiency; they remain focused on themselves and their own needs.

The Father never intended you or me to live in isolation. The Christian life is one of relationships—first with God and then with each other. Yes, close friendships are sometimes uncomfortable or inconvenient. But they are tremendously important in the kingdom of God. One of the most powerful aspects of living in community with fellow believers is the context it provides for giving and receiving encouragement. We live in a world that is increasingly fragmented and isolated. Christians need meaningful, uplifting connections with one another more than ever.

SERMON POINTS

As Christians, we cannot ignore our manifold responsibility to other believers.

The Bible gives us specific commands about how we are to relate to one another. Scripture tells us to accept and comfort other believers. We are called to admonish one other, confess our sins, and forgive graciously. The Bible instructs us to live in peace with others. We are to show each other love and be hospitable, patient, and tenderhearted. God’s Word tells us to faithfully pray for and encourage one another as we motivate each other to good deeds.

What exactly does encourage mean?

This word means to call to one’s side; to help, console, or strengthen; or to instill courage in another person. The men and women of the early church were willing to encourage each other, and their faithfulness demonstrated the power of the gospel to their generation. God asks no less of you and me today.

Needing encouragement is part of being human.

Jesus provides the most powerful example of this truth. The night before His crucifixion, He said to His disciples, “Remain here and keep watch with Me” (Matt 26:38). He was fully God and fully man; His human nature longed for the company and encouragement of His friends as He looked ahead to the cross.

The simplest words and actions can have a powerful impact on the life of another.

I can still remember the people who encouraged me as I was growing up. My first grade teacher encouraged me when she commented, “I like Charles.” My father had died, and my mother worked long hours to make ends meet. So that teacher’s kind words to another instructor made an awesome impression on me. When I was a teen, one of my Sunday school teachers went out of his way to talk with me whenever he saw me delivering newspapers. He didn’t necessarily say anything important, but the attention he gave me sent the message that I was significant. As an adult, I have been blessed with wonderful friends who have walked with me through the darkest times of my life. Sometimes they knew just what to say; other times, simply their presence was encouraging. You never really know the impact your words or your company will have on another person’s life.
The Bible gives us examples of those who encouraged others.

- Barnabas, whose name means “son of encouragement,” knew how to support others. When he heard that many in the early church were suffering financially, he sold a piece of his property and gave the money to the apostles to provide for the needy (Acts 4:36-37). Later, he was the first believer to trust that Paul had truly become a friend of the church, instead of its persecutor (Acts 9:19-30). He spoke up for the new convert and urged the rest of the believers to accept Paul as a genuine follower of Christ.

- The apostle Paul was also an encourager. Even after he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra, he chose to return to the area and encourage the believers there (Acts 14:19-22). When his captors and fellow prisoners were afraid of dying in a terrible storm at sea, he lifted their spirits by telling them God had promised their survival (Acts 28:23-26). This tone was a common one for Paul; for the most part, his epistles are full of encouragement, rather than condemnation.

- Our Lord also demonstrated a lifestyle of encouragement. Jesus was kind to people the rest of society considered unimportant or unclean. For example, when the blind beggar Bartimaeus called out to Him, Jesus stopped and took the time to heal him (Mark 10:46-48). The woman caught in adultery was going to be stoned to death, but Jesus intervened and exposed the hypocrisy of her accusers. Instead of condemning her to death or a life of shame, Christ encouraged her to give up her sin (John 8:11).

All of us need encouragement to walk out the faith.

Godly fellowship can help protect us from falling prey to the deceptions of the devil. When we make a mistake, supportive friends don’t condemn us; instead, they challenge us and help us get back on track. You and I must also be willing to offer encouragement to the people around us. That requires us to genuinely care about others, rather than about how we might benefit from our relationships. Encouragement is so powerful; it is often the deciding factor in whether someone succeeds or fails in the Christian life—or at any undertaking, for that matter.

There are many ways to show encouragement.

You can call someone, write a letter, or even send a text. Try asking, “How can I pray for you?” Take the initiative to meet a need or give a thoughtful gift. Sacrifice your time to be with a friend who may be lonely. Weep with those who weep. Express affirmation and agreement when possible. Share scriptures that speak directly to their situations. You can also encourage others by being a good example to them and giving loving, godly correction. Almost all people will feel uplifted if you really listen to them. Show your loyalty—let people know they can count on you. Don’t be afraid to say, “I love you,” especially to your family. Finally, the easiest way to be an encouragement is simply to smile.

RESPONSE

- Do you more closely fit the description of someone who is always ready to encourage others or of someone who is usually closed toward others? Why do you think you have that response to other people?

- How has the encouragement of your parents, a mentor, or a friend been life changing for you? Has God ever allowed you to offer life-altering encouragement to someone? Describe that situation.

- Go before the Lord and ask Him what He would like you to do, specifically, to encourage someone in your life.