

Encouragement

2 Corinthians 1 v 3 - 11

What encouragement is:

According to the Oxford English Dictionary

To encourage means:

‘to give courage or confidence to’

‘to urge’

‘to promote’

In the Bible there are several Greek words that are translated as encouragement:

Verbs:

Protrepo to urge forward, persuade (Acts 18 v 27)

Paramutheomai with counsel, advice 1 Thess 2 v 11, 5 v 14. John 11 v 19, 31 means comfort

Noun:

Paraklesis “a calling to one’s aid” Hebrews 6 v 18 as consolation related to parakaleo to beseech or exhort, encourgae, comfort and parakletos a paraclete or advocate.

About encouragement:

Encouragement is not always about giving advice

Encouragement does not always agree with the chosen course of action

Encouragement is not always easy, either to give or to take

Encouragement does not always come naturally sometimes it needs some work

It is sometimes about urging someone to do something or prodding the growth of their faith

Why do we need encouragement?

- To stand out from the crowd
- To face difficult circumstances
- To grow and develop
- To achieve our goals
- To just keep going...
- To keep standing firm in God

What happens with no encouragement?

- Our hearts fail...
- We can fail to grow or develop
- We can focus on our weakness and fail
- We rely on our own stubbornness to get us through
- We can feel God is nowhere near to us
- We can give up

Does encouragement always have a good outcome?

Sometimes encouragement is used to urge people to do wrong things

It can promote unhelpful or unhealthy behaviour

It can say that something is okay when it is not okay

Why don't we encourage others?

- We want to cut down tall poppies
- Society want to bring others down and we want to fit in
- We think people will get big headed if we tell them they have done something well
- We don't think to encourage (although we are often quick to criticize)

Where does our encouragement come from?

- God
- Ourselves
- Others

God the encourager

God encourages us through:

The Bible

The Holy Spirit

Our Prayer times

Romans 15 v 4 – 6

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Corinthians 1 v 21 – 22

“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, put His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit , guaranteeing what is to come.”

Acts 9 v 31

“Then the church...was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord”

Encouraging Ourselves

Through:

Knowledge of God

Faith

Determination “I have decided to follow Jesus”

Using:

Prayer

Bible Study

Listening to God

2 Corinthians 4 v 16 – 18

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Encouraging Others

- Words – genuine, kind, appropriate and specific
- Prayer - sometimes at the time or just saying we will pray (making sure we follow through)
- ‘Coming alongside’ sometimes just ‘being there’
- Comfort/Helps – practical help for difficult circumstances
- Living our lives as examples

2 Timothy 4 v 2

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction...”

Titus 2 v 6 – 7a

“Similarly encourage the young men to be self controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good....”

Hebrews 3 v 13

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness”

1 Thessalonians 5 v 11

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

Receiving Encouragement

Can be hard to hear

See the heart behind the encouragement if it is hard to hear

Be gracious and kind, think about what has been said. Act on it, or not, in line with what you feel God has spoken to you

Accept encouragement as from the Lord, but weigh it against Scripture

Understand that sometimes giving encouragement is costly to the giver and they may have struggled to share this with you.

Remember the heart behind encouragement should be about your growth in faith

Hebrews 10 v 23 – 25

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.

And let us consider how we might spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Conclusion

- Encouragement is an important part of our daily walk
- By study and application of the Bible in our daily lives; an active prayer life and seeking the encouragement that comes from the Holy Spirit

- We should see how God encourages us, how we might encourage ourselves and we should look to how we encourage others to grow in their faith
- We should consider carefully our response to those who have taken time and thought to encourage us

2 Thessalonians 2 v 13 – 17

“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

“May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”