

ENCOURAGING THE HEART

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Introduction: “Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1Thessalonians 5:11, NASB).

A. ENCOURAGE is from the Greek word *parakaleo* meaning: “to call for, to speak to by way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, and admonition; to strengthen and encourage by consolation and teaching” (Thayer, Strong, Vine).

B. ENCOURAGE - “to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope” (Webster).

C. The root word in encourage is **courage** which is from the Latin word “**cor**” meaning **heart**. Thus, to encourage is to give someone heart -- **To give courage to the heart!**

D. The Latin word “cor” is also where we get our word “**cordial**.” Thus, encouragement requires kindness, charity (or love), and generosity. Friendliness and warm courtesy is a must!

E. Beyond “well-wishing” and sentimental expressions given in a greeting card, to encourage someone is to **instill courage** in others when they face a great challenge, to **give hope** when their situation seems hopeless, and **build up their strength** to do their best in times of adversity.

I. Everyone Needs Encouragement!

1. Many have convinced themselves they do **not** need much encouragement from others in order to succeed spiritually and accomplish good works. What are some possible reasons for this?

- Parental upbringing
- People don’t experience it enough to know how important and joyous it is.
- Many are fiercely independent and try to “tough it out” without it.

2. God’s word teaches that every Christians **needs** encouragement (**Heb. 3:12-14**). Why?

- So no one goes back into sin and falls away from God.
- To be ready for the Judgment day (“while it is still called Today”)
- To be faithful until the end

3. To encourage others, God’s word also teaches that we are to **praise or commend** each other for the good that we do. Why is this important? (e.g., **Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 11:2; 12:26b; Eph. 1:15-16; Col. 1:3-6; 1 Thes. 1:2-3; 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:5; Prov. 31:28-31**; etc.).

- It is important to recognize and acknowledge the contributions of others.
- It is important to rejoice in and celebrate the success of others (1 Cor. 12:26b).

- Sometimes we doubt that we are doing right or accomplishing much good and need reassurance.
4. Also involved in encouraging is to **thank others** for the good they do, for all they contribute to the work of the Lord. We are to say to others “we thank God for them” (**Rom. 16:3-4; Phil. 1:3-7**). What does the simple phrase “Thank you” communicate to others? How would it make you feel if someone said to you: “I thank God for you”?
- We appreciate them for what they have done.
 - We noticed or acknowledged what they did with gratitude.
 - A great complement! It would make one feel valued and important.
5. To encourage one another, brethren need to be sure to **reaffirm their love** for one another, *despite* their weaknesses and imperfections (e.g., **2 Cor. 2:6-11; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; 1 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:1-2; cf. Rom. 5:8**). How important is this type of encouragement?
- To provide reassurance, lest one feel worthless, hopeless, and doubt that he is loved.
 - To give courage to others to keep on trying, despite flaws or failings.
 - To preserve unity and promote peace among brethren.
 - To show that we care and are willing to bear one another’s “burdens.”
 - Like God, we demonstrate love for sinners, instead of hatred (e.g., Hate the sin, not the sinner).

II. Spiritual Benefits of Encouragement

1. The primary source of encouraging words is found in the Scriptures (**Acts 15:32**).

What spiritual benefit does the Word bring? (**Acts 20:32; e.g., 1 Thes. 5:1-11**)

- Builds us up (edifies): Helps us to grow and stay strong spiritually
- Gives us courage, hope, and stirs us on toward faithfulness and salvation

2. What *positive* results come as a result of encouraging each other? List as many as you can from the Scriptures (**Heb. 10:24-25; Phm. 4-7; 1 Thes. 3:1-3; Eph. 6:21-22; Acts 11:22-23; 2 Cor. 7:6**)

- Love, good deeds, attendance, and faithfulness increases.
- Brethren experience joy and comfort by one another and hearts are “refreshed” and comforted.
- Brethren are strengthened and encouraged in the faith to remain true to the Lord.
- Cheer is given to the downcast or depressed.

III. What Holds Us Back from Encouraging Each Other? *Read & Consider:*

1. **Fear of expressing our feelings to others (2 Cor. 2:4).**

Expressing genuine appreciation for the efforts and successes of others means we have to show our emotions and speak openly.

2. **Fear of giving the appearance of favoritism (James 2:8-9).**

Praising one person for the good they do may raise the concern by some that they may be viewed as “playing favorites.”

3. **Encouraging others takes too much time (Eph. 5:16).**

Some do not take the time to encourage others believing they already have too many responsibilities to meet in serving God.

4. **Everybody waits for someone else to encourage them.**

The question is: What are we waiting for? (**2 Cor. 1:3-7**).