



Encouragement

To encourage means inspire with courage, spirit, or hope, to hearten, to attempt to persuade, to urge, to spur on, to stimulate, to give help or patronage, to foster. The effect of encouragement is to make someone more determined, hopeful, or confident and therefore, more likely to do something. Encouragement also includes making something more appealing or more likely to happen.

Encouragement is designed to make you strong and to make you alert. Encouragement is designed to prepare you to return to the spiritual battle and resume the fight. Encouragement is not designed to just make you feel better or take away the pain of testing.

Encouragement is needed because of God's mandate to all believers to grow to spiritual maturity. This requires many types of bona fide encouragement. Encouragement is needed because of the danger of legalism. Encouragement is needed because of the presence of great pressure in life. 2 Peter 3:18.

"but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18, NASB)

Encouragement is based on and originates from the Word of God. Encouragement is necessary because of what is at stake in God's plan for you, your development, and your involvement in God's work. Encouragement is based on the promises and character of God and the believer's decision to make use of grace resources provided by God to live the spiritual life.

Encouragement comes in the form of refreshment of body and soul, consolation and comfort, by rest from labor, and expressions of love from the one you love. Encouragement also comes in the form of faithfulness to duty by subordinates with regard to those in authority over them.

Encouragement is given to make provision for God's work that those doing it might be able to concentrate on their ministry. Encouragement is given in the form of a promise of blessing and for the purpose of keeping the person on course. Encouragement is based on God's continual presence. One form of ultimate encouragement is the biblical truth that God will not forsake any believer and will sustain them until their entire task in life is accomplished. 1 Tim. 6:13-14.

"I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Timothy 6:13-14, NASB)

Personal Encouragement Toward Other Believers

Although the Holy Spirit is the primary agent of encouragement for believers in the Church Age, there is also an encouragement function of the believer toward other believers and also to unbelievers. This is an aspect of the unconditional love we are commanded to have toward others as we mature spiritually. John 13:34; Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:2; 1 Peter 1:22.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34, NASB)

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;" (Romans 12:10, NASB)

"with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love," (Ephesians



4:2, NASB)

"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart," (1 Peter 1:22, NASB)

The Three-fold Purpose of Encouragement

As we fulfill our ministry of encouragement, we see more clearly the three-fold purpose of encouragement in the spiritual life. When we are together, we encourage each other in faith. When we are together, we encourage each other in hope. When we are together, we encourage each other in love. The goals for Christians who meet together regularly and encourage one another from a divine viewpoint are discussed below. The three-fold purpose of encouragement involves faith, hope which is absolute confidence, and love which is unconditional virtue love.

Faith

Hebrews 10:22 tells us to have a non-hypocritical thought pattern of the soul with true motivation and a true scale of values. This means to have a mental attitude with true norms and standards based on the Word of God. This means divine viewpoint from *epignosis* Bible doctrine resident in your soul and is now a part of your thinking. This is a "sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

"let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22, NASB)

As we continue to meet together and encourage one another, we should grow in faith. The Greek word for faith is πίστις (pistis) and emphasizes the full confidence in Bible doctrine as producing that faith. Remember, it takes your positive faith response to the Gospel to be eternally saved. This faith is only a little bit more than no faith at all. Faith is an absolute. You cannot measure it by volume or weight. You either have faith, or you do not.

We are encouraged to trust the Lord and to have a deeper faith in Him. We are also encouraged in our spiritual life to "not forsaking our own assembling together" for the face-to-face intake of Bible doctrine under our pastor-teacher. There we also meet like-minded believers and relate divine viewpoint and our doctrinal application to experience. Heb. 10:24-25.

"and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25, NASB)

A growing and deepening faith-rest reflects that the thinking of the Lord is not merely a collection of academic ideas. If we understand and use the faith-rest rationales, although God is an invisible spirit, His thoughts and principles become more real to us than our surroundings. We can then begin to understand Him with a correct emotional response. Therefore, when we gather regularly in the local church, we are to encourage one another to approach the Lord in this way. We are to trust Him for every detail of our lives through the faith-rest life. By doing so, we grow together in our faith. This is a powerful form of encouragement.

Hope

Believers should grow together in hope. This is a part of encouragement. Spiritual growth produces stability of mentality. Knowing and loving the Lord results in great stability in the thought pattern of the soul. When something bad happens, you might be disappointed, but you don't become "totally bummed out," discouraged, or dejected. Heb. 10:23.



“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;” (Hebrews 10:23, NASB)

We are to have our eyes on the Lord, not people, things, self, or circumstances. With our eyes on the Lord, we have stability of mentality. This is that hope or confidence being built up. This is holding unswervingly to the hope we profess. Our Lord is faithful, trustworthy and dependable.

Our faith is produced by mutual encouragement as is our hope or confidence. Where faith relates more to the present and in whom we believe, hope relates more to the future and what we believe. Hope is the result of *epignosis* Bible truth in the soul that enables you to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to have confidence in Him. This does not include confidence in other people or self.

If you have confidence in other people or yourself, you will be disillusioned when they fail or when you fail. However, we should have a trust for fellow believers who we know are growing spiritually. We should have a trust tempered with the knowledge that they have an old sin nature and are going to fail just as we have an old sin nature and are going to fail. Application of Bible truth means we are not “shot down” because we love one another unconditionally under the filling of the Holy Spirit. We must have absolute confidence in God. Although confidence is built upon faith, it is possible to be strong in faith but weak in hope. It is the intake and application of accurate Bible doctrine that enables you to love Jesus Christ and to have Him as your hope and your confidence. 1 John 3:3.

“And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3, NASB)

When you realize that the Lord could come for you at any instant, you will have a lifestyle of righteousness and holy living as a result of the filling of the Spirit and your growth under the Word of God. You are going to make sure that your life is above board from every standpoint. You will separate from those with no integrity or honor in their business or personal relationships. You will realize that the Lord more than makes up the slack and gives you every blessing that He wants you to receive. This is our confidence. As Paul stated in 1 Thessalonians, the Thessalonians were strong in faith and hope. In 2 Thessalonians they were still strong in faith, but they had become weak in hope. Why? False doctrine. False doctrine destroys our confidence in God. If you are under false doctrine, you will never have anything with which to encourage other believers. When we are together, we should encourage each other to grow in our love of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. 1:3.

“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 ever greater;” (2 Thessalonians 1:3, NASB)

Love

In Hebrews 10:24, “love” is ἀγάπη (agapē) and means to have a relaxed mental attitude toward others. It means to think of them and interact with them based on divine norms and standards resident in your soul. You should consider strongly how you can encourage each other with unconditional or impersonal love. More than any other quality in Christian virtue, mutual encouragement among members of the Body of Christ should stimulate or challenge one another to love and perform good deeds or divine good. Paul emphasized this truth to the Corinthians. 1 Cor. 13:13.

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,” (Hebrews 10:24, NASB)

“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13, NASB)



Unconditional love toward others is motivated by our personal love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This love is not automatic. We should be strongly motivated to grow in unconditional love of others. 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 4:11.

“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8, NASB)

“For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;” (1 John 3:11, NASB)

“This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.” (1 John 3:23, NASB)

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” (1 John 4:7, NASB)

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:11, NASB)

These verses tell us that unconditional love has to be nurtured and developed among Christians just as it is in marriage. We should consider carefully how we can motivate, challenge and encourage each other to practice this important Christian virtue. The phrase “In all things love” should be our guide. In the essentials, unity. In the non-essentials, liberty. In all things, love. Remember the testimony of the early church where they met together regularly. As a result, they encouraged each as a result of their spiritual growth. Col. 3:14.

“Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” (Colossians 3:14, NASB)

Fulfilling The Purpose of Encouragement

How do we obtain or fulfill the purpose of encouraging each other in faith, hope, and love? We do so by realizing that the New Testament is the complete unveiling of the Son of God and of the plan of God to each one of us. We see this from Hebrews 7.

It was fitting and right and to our benefit, as Christians, that we should have such a high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is impeccable and He is holy, which means He is perfectly set apart unto the Father and His plan for the incarnation. He is innocent, totally sinless, undefiled, separate from sinners and exalted above the heavens. This is His ultimate glorification at the Father's right hand. Heb. 7:26.

“For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;” (Hebrews 7:26, NASB)

Jesus Christ controls human history while sustaining the entire universe. Therefore, He can provide for each of us. That is something with which to encourage others. The Lord Jesus Christ will always meet all of our needs. We as believers have the Lord Jesus Christ at the Father's right hand as our great high priest. His complete sacrifice for mankind resulted in God the Father's acceptance of this sacrifice by Christ being resurrected and exalted above the heavens.

He sent the Holy Spirit to Church Age believers beginning in 30 A.D. Following that, under divine inspiration, men formulated and completed the Canon of Scripture. The entire Word of God is that revelation of God the Father, the thinking of the Son, the voice of the Holy Spirit, and it is to be the basis of our encouragement. Heb. 8:1.

“Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” (Hebrews 8:1, NASB)



Encouragement From the Power of Prayer

Our understanding of encouragement from the life of the Apostle Paul indicates there are areas we can definitely address with prayer. In fact, we should make these things a matter of prayer so that we can better engage in mutual encouragement. We need to pray that we will see purpose and meaning in our times of disappointment and difficulty. These inevitable times have and will continue to come into our lives. We should then be able to identify with others and help them in their times of trial. Pray that you would see meaning and purpose in your times of difficulty and disappointment so you will be equipped to encourage others in similar situations.

Events will occur in your life that will be a source of great distress to you. If you feel free to make them known to others or if you make them known through a silent prayer request, other believers can intercede on your behalf through prayer. It is important that we bring our problems before God the Father in prayer. We should seek prayer support from other believers during these times of distress and discomfort. In our own prayers, we should faithfully pray for others who have similar needs. Heb. 4:15-16.

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16, NASB)

We need to pray that we can develop an eternal perspective for our earthly problems like Paul did. We need to see that life on this earth is really short compared to eternity. We need to be confident that the blessings and rewards that await us in eternity are beyond description. Even if you live 100 years, it is just a little small drop in the ocean compared to eternity. Continual application of the Word of God will carry you through all of the tough times with an eternal viewpoint of blessings from God. 2 Cor. 13:11.

“Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Corinthians 13:11, NASB)

We need to pray that we will be open to hear positive feedback from fellow Christians when we are disappointed and have heartache and suffering. If we share our disappointments and our heartaches with intimate friends and they give us positive feedback based on divine viewpoint, this is encouragement! However, if we are full of self-pity and do not hear their words of encouragement due to our carnal condition, then all we can do is look forward to more self-induced misery and divine discipline. We need to pray that we can become a source of positive feedback to those who also need encouragement.

In our prayers, we should also ask for opportunities to help other believers to progress in their spiritual life. Through this interaction, we can observe the progress and experience encouragement because of it. For example, leading someone to the Lord and then leading them to Bible class where they begin to grow on basic Bible truth is a fantastic source of encouragement - again to both believers. This form of our ambassadorship to others can lead to encouragement by watching other believers grow. We are to be a source of encouragement to them by leading them to where the Word is taught - the local church. Heb. 10:24-25.

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25, NASB)

The Believer's Lifestyle Encouragement to Others



We must never depend upon other people as a primary source for security and confidence. We must realize that the Lord uses our consistent Christian lifestyle to encourage other people. A consistent Christian lifestyle reflects the character of the incarnate Christ. We should be pleased with the good things that happen in the lives of other believers. We need to let them know how we feel about their progress and encourage them. We are not only to weep with those who weep, but we are to rejoice with those who rejoice. Gal. 5:22-23.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB)

It is easy to encourage someone who is undergoing some type of disaster testing. This is because we may have been there ourselves and we can show some empathy and compassion. Now, let's look at the other side of the coin. What if someone you know gets a huge raise and seems to be prospering and being promoted? Do we rejoice with them as they rejoice, or do we immediately reflect on our own paltry raises and no promotion and become envious of them? You should instead rejoice because that person has been prospered by God.

Christians should encourage others with their own Christ-like lifestyles. We cannot encourage effectively our children, friends, and other believers to remain true to the Lord unless we are true to God ourselves. We must exemplify the fruit of the Spirit in our relationships with others.

Discouragement

Discouragement is to be deprived of courage or confidence, to be disheartened. While this is the opposite of encouragement, the Scripture shows us why discouragement occurs and what to do about it. Here are some Old Testament and New Testament examples that all come from human viewpoint while under stress.

In Deuteronomy 1:28, "melt" is מָסָה (mâsas) and means melting away, to vanish, to drop off, to grow fearful. Discouragement is a natural result of negative volition. Negative volition strips away the strength of the heart and causes it to grow faint. It also causes discouragement in others' lives.

"Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.'" (Deuteronomy 1:28, NASB)

In Numbers 32:7-9, "discouraging" is נָחַץ (nû') and means to restrain, to make averse, to turn away from your axis. The complacency or satisfaction of believers to be half of what they could be is a source of discouragement to others. Your mediocrity causes discouragement in others.

"Now why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the LORD has given them? 'This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the sons of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them.'" (Numbers 32:7-9, NASB)

In Deuteronomy 1:21, "dismayed" is חָתַת (châthath) and means shattered, dismayed, loss of power to proceed because one is hindered by terror or perplexity. Discouragement is a direct result of fear, fear of failure, fear of loss of face, fear of lack of confidence, and fear of the obstacles.

"See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (Deuteronomy 1:21, NASB)

In Numbers 21:4, "became impatient" is קָצַר (qatsar) and means to be short, to be annoyed to become



impatient, to be utterly discouraged. This is discouragement because of the way, the distance, their current circumstances of life, the endless journey, the dust, the river, the water, and the marches. Discouragement is a result of getting your eyes on your circumstances. Discouragement comes not only from people but also circumstances. Discouragement comes when you lose divine viewpoint and fall back into human viewpoint.

"Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey." (Numbers 21:4, NASB)

In Isaiah 42:4, "disheartened" is כָּהָה (kahah) and also means to grow faint. "Crushed" is רָצַץ (râtsats) and means to be discouraged, to be crushed, or shattered. When discouraged, you become a broken vessel. The Lord will never be discouraged or dimmed or crushed out. He always accomplishes His plan and purpose.

"He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law." (Isaiah 42:4, NASB)

In Nehemiah 6:16, "lost" is נָפַל (nâphal) and means cast down, falling of the face. This Hebrew word is also used in Psalms 36:12 as "have fallen." The accomplishments of God's people legitimately discouraged the enemy.

"When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God." (Nehemiah 6:16, NASB)

"There the doers of iniquity have fallen; They have been thrust down and cannot rise." (Psalms 36:12, NASB)

In Numbers 21:4, "became impatient" is קָצַר (qatsar) and also means to be annoyed.

"Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey." (Numbers 21:4, NASB)

In 2 Corinthians 7:6, "depressed" is ταπεινός (tapeinos) and means cast down, brought low with grief or depressed. It is part of the plan of God to encourage those who are discouraged.

"But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;" (2 Corinthians 7:6, NASB)

In Colossians 3:21, "exasperate" is ἐρεθίζω (erethizō) and means to stir them up to anger, harassing them and "lose heart" is ἀθυμέω (athumeō) and means discouragement of children, to be disheartened, broken in spirit. Fathers can cause discouragement in the lives of children by provoking them.

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." (Colossians 3:21, NASB)

In 2 Corinthians 4:8 and Luke 24:4, "perplexed" is ἀπορέω (aporeō) and also means to be without resources, to be in dire straits, to be left wanting, to be embarrassed, to be in doubt, not to know which way to turn.

"we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;" (2 Corinthians 4:8, NASB)

"While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;" (Luke 24:4, NASB)



In Luke 9:7, “greatly perplexed” is διαπορέω (diaporeō) and means to be entirely at loss, to be in perplexity, to be in doubt.

“Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead,” (Luke 9:7, NASB)

In 2 Corinthians 4:9, “struck down” is καταβάλλω (kataballō) and means to cast down, to throw to the ground, to put in a lower place.

“persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;” (2 Corinthians 4:9, NASB)

The Believer's Encouragement By Words And Correct Doctrine

Each of us speaks thousands of words every day. How many of these words and phrases can we honestly say are words that encourage, comfort, console, challenge, and refresh other people? The Word of God gives us correct doctrine through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, there are many other ways that we can use words to encourage others. When we use them appropriately, they can have a profound impact on those who hear them. Prov. 12:25.

“Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad.” (Proverbs 12:25, NASB)

Anxiety in the thought pattern of the soul weighs it down. You can be “bummed out” in your thinking because of fear, worry and anxiety, but somebody can come along with a good word that will cause you to again trust the Lord and to put your faith and reliance in God. This change of attitude and confession of sin eliminates the anxiety in the thought pattern of the soul. A good word makes the heart glad. At times, all of us have experienced this kind of anxiety. Psalms 34:18-19.

“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.” (Psalms 34:18-19, NASB)

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted. Perhaps that is your status today. All of us have been greatly disappointed in our lives at one time or another. People have betrayed each of us or someone has hurt us in some way. This may occur in an area of disaster testing such as a loss of health, wealth, or a loved one. This can cause broken heartedness and anxiety in the heart. It can cause a great sense of disappointment or even discouragement.