

Building A Christian Community "Encourage One Another" Ephesians 4:16

Introduction

This is our third lesson in a series on Building a Christian community. The New Testament calls us to a level of involvement with one another that takes us beyond just attending meetings like this. The New Testament calls us to become part of a network of Christ-centered personal relationships. It is the kind of involvement that results in solid spiritual growth and challenges us to reach out to people who don't have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Ephesians 4:15 introduces us to this ministry of encouragement. The Apostle Paul writes, "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." ([Ephesians 4:15-16 NKJV](#))

Romans 14:19 says, "Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another." ([Romans 14:19 NKJV](#))

In John 13:34, Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." ([John 13:34-35 NKJV](#))

John White wrote a book called "The Fight" in which he says, "Nothing convinces people that God exists or that awakens their craving for him, like the discovery of Christians who love one another. The sight of loving unity among Christians arrests the non-Christian. It crashes through his intellect, stirs up his conscience, and creates a tumult of longing in his heart because he was created to enjoy the very thing that you are demonstrating." John White, "The fight (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press 1979) pp 149,150.

Loving one another as Jesus loved his disciples was so important that the disciples went out of their way to explain it in their letters to Christian communities. It was a truth the disciples consistently and intentionally taught.

Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." ([Hebrews 10:23-25](#))

In the New Testament, at least 50 verses use the phrases "one another" or "each other" to explain how we should relate to one another. We will only look at a few of

them in this series, and today we will examine the one that says, "Encourage One another."

According to the Discovery Bible, the Greek word translated "encourage" is used to describe how the Lord inspires believers to pass this along (*His holy urges*) through Spirit-inspired *encouraging, warning, and exhorting*. As the God of all comfort, the Holy Spirit is the Parakete. He is the One who comes alongside us to encourage us that God is with us! This holy urging comes to us 23 times in the New Testament as a noun and 54 times as a verb. Encouraging one another is definitely a foundational part of building and developing a vital Christian Community.

The first lesson of encouragement is to learn how to be supportive of others.

I. Be Supportive of Others

The Holy Spirit urges us to come alongside other believers to encourage and help and support them in their faith journey. It presumes that the person God is calling us to help is under pressure, feeling fearful, weak, or overwhelmed. This holy urging from the Spirit of God comes to us to strengthen and supply what is needed to help a person overcome and be victorious. At the urging of the Holy Spirit, we give the appropriate aid that is needed.

Ancient Greek authors sometimes used it to describe receiving military reinforcements during a battle. Many Christians today live in a situation of intense pressure, not just the usual stresses of everyday life, but also the pressures of serving Christ in a spiritually hostile environment. There are believers around the world who are suffering for their faith in Christ and need Biblical encouragement.

Believers also need to be spiritually strengthened. Our world has become so harmful and destructive that most of us need encouragement on a regular basis just to hang in there and continue the fight for sharing the good news. God wants to use each of us to strengthen one another with truth and hope through Biblical encouragement. Biblical encouragement that the Holy Spirit inspires urges us to keep following God's will for our lives.

God wants us to form relationships within the body of Christ that are rich in encouragement. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing."

[\(1 Thessalonians 5:11\)](#)

Encouragement is one of the most powerful features of the Christian community! Every believer needs to master the art of encouragement and incorporate it into your everyday life. It will result in your own spiritual growth and incredibly impact your spouse, children, work associates, neighbors, and Christian friends. As members of a strong, healthy Christian community, we give up being selfish and take up being encouragers.

In the Christian community, we encourage each other to be our very best and achieve the very best for the glory and honor of Christ.

II. Believe the Best of Others

We face pressures on various levels, which means biblical encouragement must take on many different forms. Let me give you some great ways you can provide biblical encouragement:

The first is affirmation. Affirmation is encouragement that affirms those who don't see their value or potential. A biblical example of this is Jesus' first encounter with Peter in John 1:41. It says that Andrew "first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone). (John 1:41-42)

John doesn't use the normal verb for "look" here. He uses a word that means "gaze intently into." It's like Jesus peers into Peter's soul, sized him up--and then says, "You are Simon son of John, but you shall be called Peter." In those days, names meant more than they do today. They summarized key features of a person--like nicknames often do today. "Simon" was a name associated with one who vacillates, and if you know anything about Peter, you know how accurate this was. Jesus knew that Peter was like his name, but He also saw Peter in terms of what he would become as one of his devoted followers, "You will be called 'the Rock.'" That is how Jesus won Peter's heart.

Don't we all want a relationship with someone who knows our worst flaws and weaknesses and yet still loves us and relates to us in terms of our potential? No one does this like Jesus Christ. God wants this for each one of us. Eph. 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

Such is the impact of affirmation. It is an excellent tool of encouragement.

Another form of encouragement is praise! God praises those who step out and take those scary steps of faith. God applauds our spiritual progress, just as parents do instinctively with their young children. They learn to crawl, and we heap praise upon them. Then they learn to walk, and we heap even more praise on them. Hopefully, we continue to do this throughout their lives, with hugs, kisses, handclaps, notes, and text messages. Why do we do this? Because we know how difficult and yet necessary it is for people to feel like their making progress and experiencing success.

The Holy Spirit knows that praise fortifies us as the children of God, and so He keeps urging us on until we master the skills of discipleship. Even if you are a brand new Christian, Christ still urges you to take those scary steps of faith and share your faith with your family and coworkers. It's so encouraging when God

sends someone to express how important you are and how excited God is that you are growing in faith!

Paul was a master at this form of encouragement; it is one of the secrets of his outstanding leadership. Notice what he tells the new Christians in Thessalonica in 1 Thess. 1:2-8, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-8)

If you really want to encourage someone, catch them doing something right, and tell them how you noticed it! Better yet, tell them about it in front of others!

Thirdly, encouragement consoles those who have had their spiritual wind knocked out. Paul tells these same Christians to "encourage the fainthearted." 1 Thessalonians 5:14, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all." (1 Thessalonians 5:14 NKJV)

The "fainthearted" is literally the "small-souled"--those who have had their spiritual wind knocked out through adversity. Some of the Thessalonian believers had recently lost Christian family or friends. Paul encouraged them and urged them to encourage one another with these words from Chapter 4, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 NKJV)

Even Christians suffer broken hearts, loss of loved ones, economic reversals, poor health, deal with agonizing family problems, and even failure. When your problems pile up on you at once, hope can vanish under a cloud of pain and despair. What we need most during these times is the consolation of God.

The touch of empathy reminds us of Christ's promise to stand by us. He will never leave us or forsake us, and He will work through our situations for good, and He has a glorious future for us. Anyone who has had the wind knocked out of them knows how powerful this form of encouragement is.

Finally, encouragement exhorts those who are tempted to give less than their best. Paul does this with Timothy. Timothy was intimidated by the many problems he faced in Ephesus and tempted to give up. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

The author of Hebrews says this to a group of Christians who are faltering under God's discipline, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11)

Are you involved enough with other Christian friends that they know when you need to be exhorted?

Affirmation, Praise, Consolation, and Exhortation! These are great tools of encouragement. Can you remember any times when you received these different kinds of encouragement?

III. Build-Up Confidence in Others

As great as receiving encouragement is, becoming an effective encourager is even better. Effective encouragers know and use God's Word skillfully. It is God's Word, not our personality, or cleverness, or intelligence, that has the power to lift people up and give them hope. Rom. 15:4 says, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

Isaiah describes the effect the Messiah would have on his followers and the reason why. He says, "The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to *him who is* weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned." (Isaiah 50:4)

It's great to learn a passage that encourages you. It's even more fulfilling to use that same passage to encourage someone else. Sometimes this means showing or sharing a passage with someone. Sometimes it means phrasing it in your own words. Sometimes it means sharing how this truth has encouraged you.

If you get together with other Christians, you increase your chances for spiritual growth and encouragement. The key to long-term fellowship in small groups is how committed you are to encouraging one another. Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works." (Hebrews 10:24)

As you think about others, your friends, and fellow Christians, do you pray for them? God will often draw your attention to the kind of encouragement they need and give you a word of encouragement for them. When this happens, you need to follow through! You'll be amazed to see how often it was exactly what they needed! Emails, notes, and phone calls can be very powerful tools for encouragement.

Conclusion

But, as with any skill or art, you need to practice! Don't wait until it feels "natural," or you'll be waiting forever! Our fallen nature will always be aversive to providing encouragement, so you will need to step out by faith. However, the more you do it, the easier it will get.

You should make it a goal to encourage someone every single day! Open your eyes and see the many opportunities to encourage family, coworkers; neighbors; and friends. One of the reasons you are such a great congregation is because most of you do these things already! There's a lot of great encouragement that happens here at Crossroads Chapel. That's why I'm so proud to be a part of this church. So keep up the good work of encouragement!