

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER 1 Thessalonians 5:9–11 NIV

Encouraging One Another to Keep the Faith

1. Howard Rutledge, a U.S Air Force Pilot, was shot down over N. Vietnam.

- a. He spend several Horrible years in a Vietnamese POW camp before finally being released
- b. He Reflected on the isolation and hardship in a Book: *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*:

“During those longer periods of enforced reflection it became so much easier to separate the important from the trivial, the worthwhile from the waste. For example, in the past, I usually worked or played hard on Sundays and had no time for church. For years Phyllis [his wife] had encouraged me to join the family at church. She never nagged or scolded—she just kept hoping. But I was too busy, too preoccupied, to spend one or two short hours a week thinking about the really important things.

Now the sights and sounds of death were all around me. My hunger for spiritual food soon outdid my hunger for steak. Now I wanted to know about that part of me that will never die. Now I wanted to talk about God and Christ and the church. But in solitary confinement, there was no pastor, no Sunday school teacher, no Bible, no hymnbook, no community of believers to guide and sustain me. I had completely neglected the spiritual dimension of my life. It took prison to show me how empty life is without God.” (*Rutledge, In the Presence of Mine Enemies*)

2. Isolation extinguishes many things—it can also brings to light many things

- a. It Can Extinguish Relationships, Encouragement, and even Hope
- b. But in the Darkness of Isolation—a single candle light shines even brighter
- c. Whether we realized it before or not—We Need Each Other

I. UNDERSTANDING ENCOURAGEMENT

A. THE COMMAND OF ENCOURAGEMENT

1. We Are Commanded to Encourage One Another (1 Thess. 5:11 NIV)
2. We Can’t Encourage One Another in Isolation (Hebrews 10:23–25 NIV)

B. THE DEFINITION OF ENCOURAGEMENT

1. ENCOURAGE: Greek: to build or strengthen

The action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope (Oxford American Dictionary)

2. **DISCOURAGE**: cause someone to lose confidence or enthusiasm (Oxford Am. Dict.)

3. Root Word Here is **COURAGE**—it takes Courage to be a Christian

a) To Encourage someone in the Faith is to Strengthen their faith

b) To Discourage Someone in the faith is to Weaken their faith

c) Notice these words of Christ (Mark 9:42)

d) When You Encourage one to Keep the Faith—you’ve helped save a soul
(Even a Mustard Seed of Encouragement Can Help)

e) But If You Discourage someone in the Faith—You’ll Answer to God!

4. The Difference Between the Two has Eternal Ramifications!

C. THE WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT OR DISCOURAGEMENT

1. Our Words Have the Power of Life and Death (Proverbs 18:21)

a) DEATH WORDS

- (1) Death words can burn down families, and poison hearts (James 3:5-6, 8)
- (2) Words are not just heard once—but in our psyche and sub-conscious they are heard over and over again—for good or bad
- (3) Like a son who still remembers his father’s criticism for not working hard enough. But now he is a workaholic, still trying to prove himself against words that were given 30 years before, but never forgotten.

b) LIFE WORDS

- (1) **EXAMPLE:** Story of man who died and a piece of paper was in his wallet, friends at funeral, teacher assignment...
- (2) Words Can Damage or Words Can Heal (Proverbs 12:18)
- (3) Jesus spoke the words of life (Jn 6:63, 68)

2. Words Can Damage—or Words Can Heal (Prov. 15:4; 16:24)

- a) Our Words are so Powerful—that they will judge us (Matthew 12:37)
- b) Our Words can Even Dissolve Anxiety and Depression (Proverbs 12:25)

POEM: “This is not / the age of information. / This is *not* / the age of information.

Forget the news / and the radio / and the blurred screen.

This is the time / of loaves and fishes.

People are hungry / and one good word is bread / for a thousand. (David Whyte)

II. WHY WE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT

A. THE CAUSES OF DISCOURAGEMENT

1. A number of things can cause discouragement...

- a) The Daily Difficulties of Living in Broken World can wear us down
- b) Injustice and lawlessness (Mt 24:12)
- c) Unmet Expectations (Prov. 13:12)
- d) The Lies and Attacks of the Enemy
- e) Even Our Own Mistakes and Guilt of Past
- f) Our Own Dysfunctional Thinking Errors

(I must always be happy, I must always be in control, Everyone must like me)

“I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure, which is: Try to please everybody.” –Herbert Swope

- g) Betrayal, Rejection and Hurt Feelings
- h) Dealing with Difficult and Abusive People (even in the church)

(DEFINE: “Antagonists are individuals who go out of their way to make insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others. These attacks are selfish in nature, tearing down rather than building up.” – Kenneth C. Haugk, Antagonists in the Church)

Aristotle: “The only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing.”

B. THE EFFECTS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

1. Discouragement causes us

- a) to “loose heart” (**Galatians 6:9–10**) to Loose Our Courage
- b) A Broken Spirit (**Proverbs 15:13; 18:14**)
- c) Dries Up Our Strength (**Prov. 17:22**)
- d) Loneliness (Studies now show younger people are lonelier than older people)
- e) It Causes Anger, Depression, Loneliness, Hopelessness
- f) and eventually causes some to give up on God

2. This is What Satan Wants! > This is What the Fallen World Wants!

- a) They Want You Angry, Depressed, Lonely, Hopeless
- b) They Want You to Give Up > So They Can Get Their Way

3. Satan Wants You Discouraged and Angry (1 Thessalonians 3:1–5**)**

C. THE NEED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

1. Paul Was An Apostle—but he was Arrested & imprisoned in Rome by Nero,

- a) He was Forsaken by Demas,
- b) Hurt by Alexander the Coppersmith (Paul dealt w Difficult People even in the church)
- c) He was Forsaken By Everyone Else! (**2 Timothy 4:9-16**)

2. But by Faith, Paul Knew —

- a) **God is in Control!**
- b) **God Will Help Us!**
- c) **In the End God will be Victorious! (**2 Timothy 4:17–18**)**

III. REALIZING THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

A. THE POWER OF TRUTH—God’s Word

1. When Jesus was in the Garden, Praying Intensely that the cup would pass

- a) God Heard His Prayer and sent an Angel to Strengthen Jesus

2. What Jesus Did For Us is a Huge Source of Strength (Romans 1:16-17**)**

- a) **A Dear Brother in Christ was a close friend of my Grandfather**
- b) He was an old Army Guy with a big laugh and Grandpa had taught him the gospel
- c) Well he in turn taught his old army buddy the gospel (we worshipped together)
- d) But when John was near death, he was upset and had some deep questions.
- e) He had obeyed the gospel and was baptized for the revision of sins...
- f) But, on his death bed, past memories of guilt were haunting him
- g) He’d lied to get into the army for WW2 and fought bloody battles in Pacific

3. Our Past is Forgiven by God’s Grace—

- a) The Blood Jesus shed 2,000 yrs ago is the blood that forgives our sins
- b) and nightmares of past sins cannot change that.
- c) A Christian Brother was there to Encourage His Brother in Christ with TRUTH

B. THE POWER OF PRESENCE—You're Not Alone, Others Care About You

1. Notice this one another passage: (Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV)

a) **The Greek word here for encourage is Parakaleo: to call alone side**
Closely related to Paraklētōs advocate, or comforter, counsellor, helper

b) It literally means: Someone to stand by you and help and strengthen you...

c) Not in Front of You or Behind You—but Beside You as a Friend Who Cares!

2. It is used of Jesus as our Advocate and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter

a) As a Child of God You Are Not Alone and Will Never Be Alone!

C. THE POWER OF HOPE—Hope is Based on the Promises of God

1. (Romans 5:1–5) No Matter What Happens, We Have the Promises of God

a) **God is In Control!**

b) **God Will Help Us**

c) **In the End God Will Have the Victory!**

D. THE POWER OF LOVE

1. I heard about a wife who's husband called her and told her he was having an affair and was leaving her for another woman.

a) She was alone at the house and crumbled to the floor in tears.

b) Her grief was so raw she was just sobbing on the kitchen floor.

c) Her young son walked into the room and curled up next to her on the floor and said,
"mommy it will be alright."

d) Suddenly a Strange Peace just Washed Over Her and she stopped crying

2. Why? Because of the Pure Love from the Heart of a Child

Love... always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

E. THE POWER OF PRAYER

1. Luke 18:1 that men always should pray and NOT loose heart

2. Paul tells us: Be anxious about nothing but pray about everything

(Philippians 4:6–7)

3. What a Great Source of Strength to take everything to God in Prayer

CONCLUSION:

1. We Can Encourage One Another

a) With the TRUTH, with our PRESENCE, with HOPE, with LOVE and w/ PRAYER

2. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 NIV