



Encouragement:

**Manna and Medicine for the
Weak and Weary**

Hebrews 10:22-24

- “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”

Examining Encouragement

- Defining encouragement
- The need for encouragement
- How we encourage one another
- We can become encouragers
- How to encourage ourselves
- How to remain encouraged
- Strategies for maintaining encouragement

What Is Encouragement?

- The scriptures speak of similar concepts: encouragement and edification
 - Encouragement: “The act of giving courage, or confidence of success; incitement to action or to practice; incentive” (Webster's)
 - Edification: “A building up, in a moral and religious sense; instruction; improvement and progress of the mind, in knowledge, in morals, or in faith and holiness” (Webster's)

What Is Encouragement?

- Encouragement - parakaleo: “to address, speak to, (call to, call upon), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; to admonish, exhort; to beg, entreat, beseech; to strive to appease by entreaty; to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort; to receive consolation, be comforted; to encourage, strengthen; exhorting and comforting and encouraging; to instruct, teach” (Thayer's)
- Edification - oikodomeo: “to build; to found, establish; to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness; to grow in wisdom and piety” (Thayer's)

What Is Encouragement?

- Encouragement and edification are the means by which we generate courage in one another and build each other up
 - This is often done by word
 - It can involve comfort (physical, emotional, mental, social, etc) or exhortation (instruction, direction, commissioning, etc)
 - It is inherently constructive

Encouragement / parakaleo

- Acts 14:21-22 - “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”
- 2Cor. 1:3-4 - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Encouragement / parakaleo

- 2Cor. 7:13 - “Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”
- 1Thes. 4:18 - “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”
- 1Thes. 5:14 - “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”
- Heb. 3:13 - “But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Encouragement / parakaleo

- Heb. 10:25 - “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.”
- Jude 3 - “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Edification /oikeodomeo

- Acts 9:31 - “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”
- 1Cor. 8:1 - “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.”

Edification /oikeodomeo

- 1Cor. 10:23 - “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.”
- 1Cor. 14:17 - “For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.”
- 1Thes. 5:11 - “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing”

The Need For Encouragement

- Encouraging one another and building one another up are commands of God
 - Why?
 - Encouragement and edification are required by the nature of Christianity

The Need For Encouragement

- Christianity is a volunteer religion
 - God does not force anyone to do anything
 - James 4:8 - “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

The Need For Encouragement

- God will sit in judgment on the last day
 - Acts 17:31 - “He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”
- However, Christians have no authority to force any other Christian to do anything

The Need For Encouragement

- Occasionally, it becomes necessary to disassociate from someone who persistently acts immorally or teaches error, but that does not force anyone to do anything
 - 1Cor. 5:1-13
 - Rom. 16:17-18

The Need For Encouragement

- Christians serve God out of their own desire and not by any form of force
- That is why encouragement and edification are the motivators; they are the way established by God for Christians to work with one another.

The Need For Encouragement

- While some may require strong exhortation and rebuke to good conduct, encouragement is designed to be overwhelmingly positive
 - Phil. 4:6-9 - “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

The Need For Encouragement

- One cannot easily build up by tearing down
 - Col. 4:6 - “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

The Need For Encouragement

- Matt. 23:1-4, 13-15 - “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers... 13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves”

How To Encourage

- Encouragement comes through joint participation in Christ
 - Heb. 10:24-25 - “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 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.”
 - Acts 14:21-22 - “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

How To Encourage

- 1Cor. 10:16-17 - “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”
- 1Cor. 14:16-17 - “Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.”

How To Encourage

- Eph. 5:19 - “**Speaking to one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”
- Col. 3:16 - “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, **teaching and admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

How To Encourage

- Encouragement is to be given outside of assemblies as well
 - 1Peter 4:9 - “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”
 - Gal. 6:1-2 - “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
- Such things cannot be expected to occur if brethren only see each other in assemblies

How To Encourage

- Social associations and gatherings
- Home Bible studies
- Getting together to do work projects (at the church building or at each others' homes)
- Discussion, conversation, listening
- Just being there
- Sharing in others' lives (at both happy and sad occasions)

How To Encourage

- Encouragement is generated when Christians are involved in each other's lives in a positive way
- If a Christian is not involved with other Christians, he cannot be the source of encouragement he is commanded to be.
- God's system of volunteer Christianity breaks down with you.

Acts 11:19-24

- “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.”

Encouragement

- Barnabas was nicknamed the son of encouragement by the apostles. What does it take to get that kind of name?
 - Acts 4:36 - “Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement)”
 - 1Thes. 5:11, 14 - “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing... 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

Romans 15:1-7

- “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me. 4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. 5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”

How Can We Get That Kind Of Reputation?

- Be close enough in love to our brethren to know when they need encouragement.
 - Rom. 12:15 - “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

How Can We Get That Kind Of Reputation?

- Give them what we wish they would give us under the same circumstances.
 - Matt. 7:12 - “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

How Can We Get That Kind Of Reputation?

- Use what you get from God that encourages you to encourage others
 - 2Cor. 1:4 - “Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”
 - 1Thes. 4:18 - “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

How Can We Get That Kind Of Reputation?

- Realize it isn't about us; it's about service to others
 - Phil. 2:1-4 - “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

How To Encourage Ourselves

- “Why should I have to encourage myself?”
 - What if no one is there to encourage us?
 - What if our encouragers are inadequate to the task?
 - What if someone in more serious straits than ourselves is in need of encouragement?
- How do we lift ourselves so that we can help lift up others?

How To Encourage Ourselves

- Be active in the work of the local congregation
 - Psalm 84:10 - “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”
 - John 13:12-17

How To Encourage Ourselves

- Offer our services to the elders, teachers, the aged or ill
 - Isa. 6:8 - “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us? Then I said, Here am I! Send me.”
- Look for work needing done
- Start a program of regular daily devotions
- Participate in a Bible study group
- Be involved in leading people to Christ

How To Encourage Ourselves

- Practice constant self-examination
 - 2Cor. 13:5 - “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you are disqualified.”

Questions We Should Ask Ourselves Often:

- Do I have a better Bible knowledge than a year ago?
- Am I as interested in Jesus Christ today as when I was baptized?
- Have I helped someone else to become a Christian?
- Am I enjoying life as a child of God?
- Am I improving my life and my disposition?
- Do I set a good example for other Christians?
- Am I growing in such activities as Bible study, prayer, worship?

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- Recognize the danger in a negative, discouraged attitude
 - Of the twelve spies of Israel, ten did not believe they could take the land of Canaan
 - Num. 13:31-33 - “But the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- Their despairing attitude discouraged the rest of Israel
 - Num. 14:1-4 - “So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? 4 So they said to one another, Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- Num. 32:5-9 - “Therefore they said, If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan. 6 And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben: Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? 7 Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them? 8 Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. 9 For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- It led Israel to complain and rebel against God
 - Deut. 1:26-28 - “Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27 and you complained in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28 Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- It moved them to lose faith in God
 - Deut. 1:29-33 - “Then I said to you, Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place. 32 Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, 33 who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- It ended with many dying in the wilderness
 - Num. 14:31-32, 36-37 - “But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. 32 But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness... 36 Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, 37 those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- When discouragement is allowed to prevail unchecked:
 - We stop believing in God and in our ability to do His will
 - We stop trying to do God's will
 - We discourage others around us
 - We fail to reach the goals God has placed before us

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- When people are encouraged, motivated by a positive spirit:
 - The people have a mind to work
 - Neh. 4:6 - “So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- When people are encouraged, motivated by a positive spirit:
 - It helps them overcome ridicule from their opponents
 - Neh. 4:1-3 - “But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish-stones that are burned? 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- When people are encouraged, motivated by a positive spirit:
 - It leads to reaching their goals
 - Neh. 6:15 - “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.”

Choose To Remain Encouraged

- When we are encouraged
 - We continue to believe in God and our ability to serve Him
 - We keep trying to do what God wants us to do
 - We encourage those around us, and overcome those who would discourage us
 - We ultimately reach the goals that God has placed before us

Baruch's "Earnest" Repairs

- Nehemiah 3 and encouragement found in a work invoice
 - Neh. 3:1 - The priests went to work first (set the example for others)
 - Neh. 3:5, 27 - The Tekoites went to work, even though their leaders did not, and then went on to build a second section
 - Neh. 3:12 - Shallum took his girls to work with him
 - Neh. 3:13 - Hanun built 1/3 of a mile of wall
 - Neh. 3:20 - Baruch worked in an isolated corner of the wall, but made "earnest" (zealous) repairs.

Choose To Be Affirmative

- We can control our attitudes and moods
 - We may not be able to control or change our circumstances, but we can control how we react to them

Choose To Be Affirmative

- We can choose to rejoice in hard times
 - James 1:2-4 - “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”
 - Rom. 5:3-4 - “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Choose To Be Affirmative

- We can choose to rejoice in hard times
 - 2Cor. 4:16 - 5:1 - “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Choose To Be Affirmative

- We can choose to rejoice in hard times
 - Phil. 2:17-18 - “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

Block Out Pessimism

- Avoid negative self-talk
 - "I can't do it..."
 - "It's too hard..."

Block Out Pessimism

- Remind ourselves that we can do what God wants us to do
 - Phil. 4:13 - “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
 - Phil. 2:12-13 - “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Block Out Pessimism

- The more efforts we make, the more results we will see
 - Gal. 6:7-9 - “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
 - 1Tim. 4:15 - “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all”

Block Out Pessimism

- The more efforts we make, the more results we will see
 - 1Cor. 15:58 - “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Block Out Pessimism

- Avoid negative people
 - 1Cor. 15:33 - “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”
 - Avoid people who prefer to whine, complain, and criticize; who clearly have chosen to see harm, evil, and darkness everywhere

Block Out Pessimism

- Surround ourselves with active, edifying people
 - Heb. 10:24 - “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works”
 - 1Cor. 16:17-18 - “I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.”

Block Out Pessimism

- Surround ourselves with active, edifying people
 - Philemon 4-7 - “I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.”
- Like Barnabas, the son of encouragement - Acts 4:36; 11:22-24

Live In The Present With An Eye To The Future

- Live in the present, not the past
 - 1Tim. 1:12-15 - “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

Live In The Present With An Eye To The Future

- Paul chose not to dwell on past mistakes (or past successes), but to press on toward the future
 - Phil. 3:12-14 - “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Live In The Present With An Eye To The Future

- This mature spirit is what helped Paul to maintain a hopeful attitude even in the most difficult of times
 - Phil. 3:15 - “Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”
 - 2Tim. 4:18 - “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”