



Strengthening Your Grip on Key Areas of Your Christian Life

Encouragement

Introduction:

1. This is week #7 of our series: **Strengthening Your Grip on KEY AREAS in your Christian Life**
2. Our emphasis is reaching out to people, building bridges in our relationships with people, getting out of our comfort zones and 'connecting' with others, and 'Gearing Up' for the fall season if the Lord allows us to minister then
 - ❖ Our primary goal: To glorify God by showing love to one another, demonstrating we are the disciples of Christ, and reaching out to others!
 - > meeting people where they are (that's a lot of what this emphasis on discipleship has been about) and helping them take the NEXT step of growth
3. Each week, we've tried to keep the following question in front of all of us!

Q: What is the NEXT step of growth for you . . .for us as a church?

[serving, leadership, evangelism, hospitality to others, prayer life, study of the Word, etc.]
4. We've spent the last 3 weeks focusing on one of the most important areas in our Christian life . . . and in the life of our church . . .
 - i.e. the IMPORTANT subject: *Strengthening Your Grip . . . on Discipleship!*
5. Today, our study focuses on a specific area of discipleship – a ministry that is important to all of us: Strengthening Your Grip on Encouragement
 - I want to begin our time with this question

Input: What example do you have of a time where somebody encouraged you (big or small) and it made a difference in your life?

[various examples]

6. We need to remember, **The only encouragement we 'need' (i.e. have to have it) comes from God** – through His Son and the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God
 - Q: Could we have made it in that situation without that encouragement?
 - A: YES – God's '*grace is sufficient*' (2 Cor. 12:9) and '*with Him, all things are possible*' (Lk 1:37)
7. While, ultimately, encouragement comes from God (His Word, grace, etc.), He often uses people to encourage others and inspire them to 'press on'
 - Examples: Col. 4:7-8; 1 Thes. 3:2; 5:14; Heb. 3:13 – then turn to our text for today

[READ Hebrews 10:19-25 – remember the context in which this book was written]

In 1st century, persecution & martyrdom was common; this resulted in fear gripping the churches which also resulted in some *DEFECTING* (running from the church) or others *DRIFTING* away from the church (keeping their distance). Hebrews was written to those who were ENDURING all this.

- let's begin by considering . . .

I. The Meaning of Encouragement

A. Greek word - - the word actually is a combination of two Greek words:

- *para* = alongside
- *kalew* = call

- the same term used for the Holy Spirit – He is ‘called alongside’ to help us bring glory to God (more on this later – but this gives you a picture of the depth & seriousness of this term)

B. Practical (Working) Definition

Encouragement = the act of inspiring others with renewed courage, spirit, or hope.

- it may be helpful to keep in mind the distinction between two other terms:

1. **Appreciation** – usually related to something someone accomplished – it focuses more on the PRODUCT (or what was produced) more than the PERSON
- or it focuses more on the RESULT than it does the RELATIONSHIP
2. **Affirmation** – goes deeper and it usually directed to the person himself/herself – in other words, it’s more personal – **it focuses more on the person and who they are than it does what they’ve DONE or what they FAILED to do.**

“While encouragement would encompass both, the rarer of the two is affirmation. . . . I do not care how influential or secure or mature a person may appear to be, genuine encouragement never fails to help.” – p. 44-45

- A few Q’s we need to ask: Where does a person GET that encouragement and HOW, WHEN, WHERE does a person GIVE that encouragement

[Note: The focus is not on GETTING encouragement, but on GIVING it, or BEING an encourager!]

II. The Place to Find Encouragement

- if there is one place a person can go to be encouraged and encourage others, it should be the CHURCH – the body of Christ
- especially during our time of worship and serving together

“Most people who go to church believe that a worship service consists only of a few hymns, a prayer or two, dropping some bucks in a plate, hearing a solo, and finally listening to a sermon. If you gave that answer to my one-question quiz ‘Why do Christians gather for worship?’ I’d have to grade you ‘incomplete’.” – p. 45

- This goes back to the context of the passage we read: Hebrews 10:19-25
- After warning them against compromising their walk of faith, he informed them of the importance of those special times they spent together and reminded them for two truths:

A. What we have in Christ:

1. We have confidence to approach God – v. 19

❖ Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus...

- we tend to have this confidence because we’ve never known it any differently; but to the 1st century believer, having confidence in the presence of God was NOT common
- Remember the vale of the temple being ripped down the middle into two pieces – making the holy of holies available to ALL believers – not just the High Pries who entered that portion of the temple ONCE a year to offer the sacrifice

Example: O.T. – no man has seen God at any time; God putting His hand over Moses when He passed by on the Mt. Sinai – Exodus 33:22

- but now, while we maintain a level of the fear of God, we have confidence in that relationship because of the way He has revealed Himself to us and the grace He's shown!

2. We have a priest who gives us access to God – referring to Christ!

❖ Hebrews 10:21 and since we *have* a great priest over the house of God...

- Jesus made it possible for us to come directly into the presence of God – Heb. 4:15-16

❖ Hebrews 4:15 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. 16 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.

- if that truth alone doesn't encourage you, then your 'encourage receptor' is busted!

- But the issue in our growth is. . .

B. What we are to do: [Christianity is a religion of action to fulfill God's plan!]

* 3 times the author uses the words 'let us' – we're suppose to DO something

1) Let us draw near to God (that's where it starts; He is our source of strength, etc.)

2) Let us hold fast (stand firm, don't quit or deny the truth, but stand for the truth)

3) Let us consider one another to stimulate one another to love and good deeds

- the writer of Hebrews is talking about encouragement – he connects what he writes in v. 24 with the v. 25!!

Point: There's a lot more to worship than sitting and listening to a sermon or bowing in prayer or taking an offering and singing a few songs

- in ADDITION to worshipping God, we are to give attention to what we might do to encourage each other

> to bring more glory to God

> to show our love for one another that Jesus talked about in John 15 – and let others know that we are His disciples!

> to help each other think right and respond to the situations God brings into our lives

Application: Notice that we are not told specifically what to do? We are simply exhorted to 'stimulate (lit., in a positive sense, to incite!) one another to love and good deeds' . . .

- The details are left up to us as we face new and different challenges

III. The Significance of Encouragement

- Certainly there is more to encouragement than a smile and a quick pat on the back.

- we're not talking about shallow words or efforts, or just going through the motions

A. A good place to start is with the word itself.

- mentioned earlier that 'encouragement' used in Hebrews 10:25 is from the same Greek root used for the Holy Spirit in John 14:26 and 16:7.

❖ John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

❖ John 16:7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

Input: How does the Holy Spirit help us in our walk with God? [various answers]

- ✓ Understand the Word of God; assures us of our salvation; empowers us to stay faithful

“Just as the Holy Spirit is called alongside to help us, so it is with us when you and I encourage someone else. In fact, when we encourage others, we come as close to the work of the Holy Spirit as anything we can do in God’s family.”

- maybe that’s why some believers don’t encourage others very much – they really don’t understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life (or they simply NEGLECT it)
- this can be an issue of BALANCE:
 - a proper emphasis on truth, but not to the neglect of encouragement
 - a stand for the truth, but not to the neglect of helping others stand
 - focusing on results and productivity, but not to the neglect of relationships and people & encouraging them

B. Anybody can do it.

- you don’t have to know a lot, just use what you do know
- you don’t have to have a position of authority, just fulfill your role as part of the body
- you don’t have to be GIFTED in this area, just OBEDIENT!

C. What if we don’t?

Input: What are some of the potential consequences of NOT encouraging others?

[various answers – they may fail, quit, discouragement, ultimately: God is not glorified!]

D. Implementing Encouragement -- specific ways we can lift up, encourage others

Input: How can we do this with our WORDS (what we say)?

- ⇒ Observe and mention admirable character qualities you see in others
- ⇒ Correspondence, thank-you notes; brief phone calls
- ⇒ Notice a job well done and say so (genuine compliments are encouraging)

Input: How can we do this with our ACTIONS (what we do)?

- ⇒ Pick up the tab in a restaurant. . .provide free tickets
- ⇒ Be supportive to someone you know is hurting

*** Caution: Motive – don’t give to get – give because it’s right and pleasing to God**

*** Encouragement is an issue of the HEART and starts in your HOME!**

- The ability to encourage grows out of one’s relationship with Jesus Christ
- Encouragement is CHRISTLIKE – if you’re not doing it, then you’re not like Jesus and you need to change in order to give the right opinion of God!

Conclusion: What are you doing to encourage others – you will be encouraged as you encourage others!

Strengthening Your Grip on KEY AREAS in your Christian Life #8 ENCOURAGEMENT – Hebrews 10

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Q: What is the NEXT step of growth for you . . .for us as a church?

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A. What we _____ in Christ:

1. We have _____ to approach God – v. 19

2. We have a _____ who gives us _____ to God – referring to Christ!

B. What we are to ____:

* 3 times the author uses the words 'let us'

1) Let us draw near to God

2) Let us hold fast

3) Let us consider one another to stimulate one another to love and good deeds

Application: Notice that we are not told specifically what to do?

Example**III. The Significance of Encouragement****A. A good place to start is with the word itself.**

Input: How does the Holy Spirit help us in our walk with God?

"Just as the Holy Spirit is called alongside to help us, so it is with us when you and I encourage someone else. In fact, when we encourage others, we come as close to the work of the Holy Spirit as anything we can do in God's family."

B. What if we don't?

Input: What are some of the potential consequences of NOT encouraging others?

C. Implementing Encouragement

Input: How can we do this with our WORDS (what we say)?

Input: How can we do this with our ACTIONS (what we do)?

* **Caution:** _____ – don't give to get – give because it's right and pleasing to God

* **Encouragement is an issue of the _____ and starts in your _____!**

Conclusion: What are you doing to encourage others?

