

## Daily Devotional, May 12, 2020    The Gift of Encouragement

Are you or someone you know facing a difficult situation and in desperate need of a spiritual “shot in the arm”? There are many people who live alone or in some form of isolation that is grating on their nerves. Most of us have been discouraged and depressed at some point in our lives, yet most of us don't know *how* to bring hope to the people in our life that we care about the most, let alone those we don't know all that well, but who may be suffering in desperation and loneliness due to this mandated isolation.

We don't think that just a simple encouraging word could make such a difference in someone's life. But in fact, an *affirming word*, given lovingly, authentically, and as God leads, is more powerful than we can imagine.

The Bible is full of examples of the benefits of speaking encouragement to others:

**We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your<sup>la</sup> faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; Romans 12:6-8 NIV**

**"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV**

Many scriptures exhort believers to **encourage one another**. And yet, sometimes we get so busy in our own lives that we neglect thinking about others. We may become insensitive to the concerns of those around us.

So how can we be a better encourager? The first step may be to ask God to help us get beyond our own inner anxieties. Being a good encourager means to have the self-assurance that God is truly with us in handling whatever stressors come our way. Next we need to be less self-focused and to be more sensitive to the needs of others. And then we need to ask God's wisdom in knowing *how* to encourage our brother or sister in Christ.

Sometimes it takes a listening ear—just showing we care by really listening to what they have to say. They might have a problem or an idea they are hesitant to move ahead with. Or it may be the challenges that many of us are facing, anxiety due to loneliness or worries that develop over the constant barrage of news stories covering the latest on the Covid-19 virus. Many people right now are stressing over lost jobs and how to make ends meet. Just knowing that someone values them enough to listen can be an encouragement.

Perhaps they need *words* of encouragement. Nothing can be more encouraging than *God's Word*, shared from a loving heart. Maybe they need us to show our faith in them with an action. As we prayerfully approach them in whatever way possible—a food delivery—a note of encouragement. God will guide.

As you consider these thoughts, does someone come to your mind? Someone who may need an inspirational word or a listening ear? Pray—and then take action. Call—and have a heart to heart. Find out what is on your friend's mind. Listen—share God's Word—then demonstrate your confidence in them.

And day by day ask God to help you get out of the box of your own world and find ways to encourage others.

**Prayer: Father, I know that sometimes I get so caught up in my own life that I don't even notice others who may need encouragement. Help me to be less self-focused and more sensitive to the needs around me. Help me to be an encourager. In Jesus' name. Amen.**