

SERMON RECAP

A BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Hebrews 3:13 says “Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

Yesterday I received a kind note of encouragement from a friend. It was only about 1 sentence long, but the Lord used it to stir some much-needed strength in my soul. Receiving the note led me to dig around more to see what the Lord says to us about the subject of encouragement. As I read passage after passage, I was struck by how essential this expression of love is for God’s people. In one sense, encouragement is like oxygen in the life of a church. It keeps hearts beating, minds clear, and hands inspired to serve. Because encouragement is so important to the church, God does not merely recommend it; he explicitly commands it.

There isn’t only one “right way” to encourage each other, but here are a few ideas to help you get started in your journey towards being an encourager: I am going to give you the first 5 and you can read the last 5.

1. Pray for God to make you an Encourager

Ask him to give you a heart that loves others and creativity to know how to show it. Ask him to help you die to self-centeredness and grow in a desire to build others up. Because God delights in helping his people obey his commands, we can trust that his Spirit will teach us how to bless others for his glory and their spiritual good.

2. Study the Life of Barnabas and ask God to Make you Like him

Barnabas was nicknamed the “son of encouragement” by the early church (Acts 4:36). He was the kind of guy you wanted to have around as you were serving the Lord. He wasn’t just a spiritual cheerleader, but he was a man of great conviction who wanted to see the church flourish and did all he could to make it happen. Ask God to give you and your church a heart like Barnabas.

3. Make encouragement a daily discipline

For some of us encouragement comes naturally, for others, not so much. This week I put a reminder in my calendar each day to send someone an encouraging note, email, text, or phone call. I need this reminder to pause, pray, and then intentionally try to spur someone on in Christ.

4. Pray for God to show you who to Encourage

Ask God to bring someone to mind that you should reach out to. One way to do this is by praying through your church's membership directory which we are in the process of putting together.

5. Use Scripture if you're Able

Nothing encourages us like promises from God's Word. Make a list of Scriptures that God has used to bless you personally or an excerpt from something you read in your daily devotional. Mine the Psalms, Romans 8, and the Gospels. Find and share riches of God's grace with others.

6. Be Specific in what you Say

The text I received from my friend included two very specific ways he had seen evidences of God's grace in my life. When I read the text, I was humbled and reminded of the fact that God does actually work in and through me. I needed that reminder.

7. Regularly Encourage your Pastor

If your pastor says something that God uses, tell him about it. Don't expect him to write you back, but just send a few lines in a card or an email. Nothing encourages a pastor like hearing specific ways God used a sermon or counseling session to work in your life.

8. Pray that God would Create a Culture of Encouragement

Ask God to make your church a community that loves each other in specific, tangible ways like encouragement. Ask God to use you to help fan that flame. Don't get discouraged if people don't return your encouragement (Matt. 6:3-4; Eph. 6:3-8) or if you don't see fruit from it (Gal. 6:9-10). For the past 2 months we created a church culture that glorifies God takes a long time, lots of prayer, and abundant grace. I encourage you to keep at it.

9. Be Wise

If you want to encourage someone of the opposite sex, use discernment in how best to do it. If I'm going to encourage a single sister in the congregation, I will tell my wife and copy her on the email. If I were encouraging a married sister, I would again tell my wife and copy her and the husband of the person I'm encouraging. You can also use that as an opportunity to encourage both the husband and wife.

10. Get Started

Who can you encourage right now? Who has blessed you recently that you can thank? What verse can you share with them? How might God use it?

May the Lord do more than we can imagine through just a little encouragement (Ephesians 3:20-21).