

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: HOW CAN WE GET ENCOURAGEMENT? Joshua 24:14)

(So honor the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD alone.)

Our Actions Should Have an Aim

Bishop Hall points out that the lives of most are misspent for lack of a certain end to their actions: ". . . wherein they do as unwise archers, shoot away their arrows they know not at what mark. They live only out of the present, not directing themselves and their proceedings to one universal scope; whence they alter upon every change of occasions, and never reach any perfection; neither can do other but continue in uncertainty and end in discomfort. Others aim at one certain, but a wrong one. Some, though fewer, level at a right end, but amiss. To live without one main and common end is idleness and folly. To live at a false end is deceit and loss. True Christian wisdom both shows the end and finds the way; and as cunning politics have many plots to compass one and the same design by a determined succession, so the wise Christian, failing in the means, yet still fetcheth about to his steady end with constant change of endeavors; such one only lives to purpose, and at last repents not that he has lived."

ENCOURAGEMENT,

When strength fails and we grow weary and discouraged, we need someone to come alongside us, show understanding, cheer us up, and inspire us to have the strength and commitment to move on. When bills pile up and money runs short, we need an encourager. When we become a single parent and the world seems against us, we need an encourager. When friends or family turn against us, we need an encourager. Our strength and resolve weaken. Oh, for someone to come beside us and lift us up and comfort us. Encouragers help us stir renewed commitment, renewed resolve. They inspire us with courage and hope. Encouragers bring a beautiful gift, often a spiritual gift, when they bring renewal through encouragement.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN THE PAST OFFERS ENCOURAGEMENT.

Joshua knew the nation's weak spots. Before dying, he called the people together and gave commands to help them where they were most likely to slip: (1) follow all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses without turning aside; (2) don't associate with the pagan nations or worship their gods; (3) don't intermarry with the pagan nations. These temptations were right in their backyard. Our associations and relationships can be temptations to us as well. It's wise to identify our weak spots before we break down. Then we can develop strategies to overcome these temptations instead of being overcome by them.

Joshua knew his life was ending. So he called all the leaders of the nation together to give them his final words of encouragement and instruction. His whole message can be summarized in 23:8, "Be faithful to the Lord your God." Joshua had been a living example of those words, and he wanted that to be his legacy. For what do you want to be remembered, and what do you want to pass on to your children and associates? You can leave them nothing better than the admonition to hold on to God and to the memory of a person who did.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: So we have been greatly comforted, dear brothers and sisters, in all of our own crushing troubles and suffering, because you have remained strong in your faith. (1 Thessalonians 3:7)

WE CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY THE EXAMPLE OF OTHERS.

During times of persecution or pressure, believers should encourage one another. Christians who stand firm in the Lord encourage both ministers and teachers (who can see the benefit of their work in those who remain faithful), and also those who are new in their faith (who can learn from the steadfastness of the mature).

KEY BIBLE VERSE: So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

WE GAIN ENCOURAGEMENT BY THE WORDS OF OTHERS.

As you near the end of a long race, your legs ache, your throat burns, and your whole body cries out for you to stop. This is when friends and fans are most valuable. Their encouragement helps you push through the pain to the finish. In the same way, Christians are to encourage one another. A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between finishing well and collapsing along the way. Look around you. Be sensitive to others' need for encouragement and be supportive with your words and actions.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. (1 Peter 1:6)

REFLECTING ON OUR ETERNAL HOPE IN CHRIST OFFERS ENCOURAGEMENT.

Do you need encouragement? Peter's words offer joy and hope in times of trouble, and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. We're called into a living hope of eternal life (1:3). Our hope is not only for the future: eternal life begins when we trust Christ and join God's family. No matter what pain or trial we face in this life, we know it is not our final experience. Eventually we will live with Christ forever.

HOW CAN WE BE ENCOURAGING?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned again to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that they must enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations. (Acts 14:21-22)

CONSISTENTLY ENCOURAGE YOUNG BELIEVERS.

Paul and Barnabas returned to visit the believers in all the cities where they had recently been threatened and physically attacked. These men knew the dangers they faced, yet they believed that they had a responsibility to encourage the new believers. No matter how inconvenient or uncomfortable the task may seem, we must always support new believers who need our help and encouragement. It was not convenient or comfortable for Jesus to go to the cross for us!

BIBLE READING: Romans 1:8-17

KEY BIBLE VERSE: For I long to visit you so I can share a spiritual blessing with you that will help you grow strong in the Lord. I'm eager to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the other. (Romans 1:11-12)

WE ARE ENCOURAGED THROUGH ENCOURAGING OTHERS.

Paul prayed for the chance to visit these Christians so that he could encourage them with his gift of faith and be encouraged by theirs. As God's missionary, he could help them understand the meaning of the Good News about Jesus. As God's devoted people, they could offer him fellowship and comfort. When Christians gather, everyone should give and receive. Our mutual faith gives us a common language and a common purpose for encouraging one another.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: So comfort and encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

TAKE TIME TO BE WITH THOSE WHO SUFFER.

Because Jesus Christ came back to life, so will all believers. All Christians, including those living when Christ returns, will live with Christ forever. Therefore, we need not despair when loved ones die or world events take a tragic turn. God will turn our tragedies to triumphs, our poverty to riches, our pain to glory, and our defeat to victory. All believers throughout history will stand reunited in God's very presence, safe and secure. As Paul comforted the Thessalonians with the promise of the Resurrection, so we should comfort and reassure one another with this great hope.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: Timothy, I thank God for you. He is the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. (2 Timothy 1:3)

WE SHOULD BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYING FOR OTHERS.

Paul constantly prayed for Timothy, his friend, his fellow traveler, his son in the faith, and a strong leader in the Christian church. Although the two men were separated from each other, their prayers provided a source of mutual encouragement. We too should pray consistently for others, especially for those who do God's work.

WHEN DO WE MOST NEED ENCOURAGEMENT?

Numbers 13:30 . . . Caleb tried to encourage the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

We need encouragement when we stand at life's crossroads.

Isaiah 35:3 . . . With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees.

We need encouragement when we are tired and weak.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 . . . Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak.

We need encouragement when we feel life's challenges are stronger than we are.

Titus 2:6 . . . In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely in all they do.

We need encouragement as we move through life's stages.

Deuteronomy 3:28 . . . Commission Joshua and encourage him, for he will lead the people across the Jordan. He will give them the land you now see before you.

We need encouragement when we are thrust into a place of leadership.

2 Chronicles 35:2 . . . Josiah also assigned the priests to their duties and encouraged them in their work at the Temple of the Lord.

We need encouragement when God has a job for us to do.

HOW DOES GOD ENCOURAGE ME?

1 Kings 19:4-8 . . . Then he went on alone into the desert, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. . . .But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" He looked around and saw some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He meets my needs at just the right time.

Psalms 138:3 . . . When I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me the strength I need.

He gives me strength when I ask.

Psalms 119:25, 28 . . . I lie in the dust, completely discouraged; revive me by your word. I weep with grief; encourage me by your word.

Romans 15:4 . . . Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. They give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises.

He's given his written word to revive me and offer me hope.

Matthew 9:2 . . . Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Take heart, son! Your sins are forgiven."

Matthew 9:22 . . . Jesus turned around and said to her, "Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed at that moment.

He forgives my sins.

Hebrews 12:5 . . . Have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said, "My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you."

Even his discipline is an encouragement, for I know it is for my ultimate good.

HOW CAN I BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS?

1 Samuel 23:16 . . . Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God.

By helping friends keep a close relationship with God.

Ephesians 4:29 . . . Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

By making sure everything you say is kind and uplifting.

2 Chronicles 32:8 . . . He may have a great army, but they are just men. We have the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles for us!

By reminding people what God can do, and wants to do, for and through them.

2 Chronicles 30:22 . . . Hezekiah encouraged the Levites for the skill they displayed as they served the Lord.

By complimenting others for a job well done.

Titus 1:9 . . . He must have a strong and steadfast belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with right teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.

By sharing God's instruction and correction.

Proverbs 15:30 . . . A cheerful look brings joy to the heart; good news makes for good health.

With a smile!

Ezra 5:1-2 . . . Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied in the name of the God of Israel to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem. Zerubbabel . . . responded by beginning the task of rebuilding the Temple.

Sometimes encouragement involves getting a person involved once again in productive work.

Acts 11:23 . . . [Barnabas] encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord.

Barnabas is known as the "great encourager" in the Bible. Barnabas's encouragement of John Mark helped him become a great leader in the church. Encouragement is more than hollow praise; it is urging others to hold fast to the principles of faith.

Philemon 1:11 . . . Now he is very useful to both of us.

Showing trust in a person is a great source of encouragement to him or her.

Philippians 1:6 . . . I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished.

Encouragement is affirming others and the work they are doing for God.

Joshua 24:2-13 . . . I gave you land you had not worked for, and I gave you cities you did not build.

Encouragement can come from reviewing God's past blessings.

Job 29:24 . . . When they were discouraged, I smiled at them. My look of approval was precious to them.

Sometimes just a smile is a great encouragement.

GOD IS OUR GREATEST ENCOURAGER.

James 4:10 . . . When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor.

God does not encourage the proud, but the humble.

PROMISES FROM GOD:

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 . . . May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father. . . .comfort your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do and say.

Joshua 23:10 . . . Each one of you will put to flight a thousand of the enemy, for the Lord your God fights for you, just as he has promised.

2 Corinthians 1:5 . . . You can be sure that the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.