

Bridgeway Community Church

Series: Be Encouraged

Dr. David Anderson

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How to Be an Encouraging Person

“What does it mean to be an encouraging person? **Let me start by telling you what it *doesn't* mean to be an encouraging person.** It doesn't mean encouraging them the way *you* would want to be encouraged rather than the way that *they* need to be encouraged. Sometimes we use models of encouragement that we've witnessed from parents and coaches, even pastors and ministers, that are bad models of encouragement.”

What's true biblical encouragement? The question assumes there are models of encouragement that might “work,” but they may not be biblical...

- Bribes
- Guilt
- Greed
- Anger
- Fear
- Comfort
- Convenience

We can be encouraged to do what's wrong, what's right, or even what's mediocre. But none of this is ***biblical encouragement.***

Encouragement is not just a NOUN, or a Destination.

“Biblical Encouragement is a VERB that moves people toward, or in, a certain Direction. As believers, when we encourage people we want to encourage them to *do* something, *believe* something, *feel* something, *stop* something or *continue* something.”

1. Biblical Encouragement is PURPOSEFUL

Paul writes this to the Colossians...

Colossians 2:2 NIV84

“My **purpose** is that they may be **encouraged** in heart and **united** in love, so that they may have the full riches of **complete understanding**, in order that they may **know** the mystery of God, namely, Christ.”

2. Biblical Encouragement is POWERFUL

Biblical encouragement not only has purpose behind it, but *power* behind it. Human encouragement may touch the emotions of the person, but when we use God’s Word to encourage people, the Holy Spirit empowers those words to touch the very heart and soul of the person.

“We’re in a day and age now when people are in desperate need of biblical and spiritual encouragement beyond the popular sayings of the latest gurus. Biblical encouragement has power behind it when we use God’s Word as a source of encouragement.”

We should pray that God gives us a “Rhema” word in the moment when we’re encouraging others. One of the best ways to use God’s Word is to REMIND people of God’s PROMISES through PRAYER.

“When people are *reminded* of what God has said, they are *encouraged* to place their faith in Him. When they place faith in Him, He *encourages their hearts* and gives them *confidence* all over again.”

You don’t always preach it; you can PRAY it:

- “God, you said that you would ‘never leave us or forsake us...’” (**Hebrews 13:5**)
- “God, you said that with you, ‘all things are possible’” (**Matthew 19:26**).
- “God, you said that ‘all things work together for the good of those who are called according to your purposes’” (**Romans 8:28**).
- “God, you said that ‘I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength’” (**Philippians 4:13**).

- “God, you said ‘Do not worry about anything, but in all things through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known to you, and *your peace* would transcend all our understanding’” (**Philippians 4:6-7**).

You can also remind people of God’s promises through PRINT or POSTS...

“There is a sister in the Lord, Bridget Thornton, who sends me little handwritten bible verses whenever she sends something to me or others in the mail.”

“Recently, a brother in the Lord, Will Eastham, wrote me a little handwritten card to encourage me and thank me.”

“A woman named Donna Campagna, a long time friend of Amber and me from the early days of the church, texted us on Friday morning and said: *I just finished morning prayer and I wanted you to both know that I still read from the Bible that the two of you gave me for Christmas in 2001.*”

“A couple in our church, Stephen and Susan Harris, often write encouraging notes with a bible verse in it to me and other staff members.”

“Use your social media to post encouraging notes, biblical principles, and scripture that lifts up.”

“Friends, we are in a day where we need all the biblical encouragement that we can get!”

3. Biblical Encouragement is PRACTICAL

Just because it is biblical does not mean it has to be spiritual only. When we meet the needs of people spiritually, it should be manifested in practical and physical ways.

- “I know of a guy who blessed another husband with a gift certificate so that he could take his wife out on a dinner date.”
- “I know of a family that lost their house in a fire last year and the worship ministry took up an offering to bless them. We stood around the Green Room at our Owings Mills-Reisterstown campus and prayed for the couple.”

- “I know a young lady who was in need of a car and another family blessed her with a new car to meet her need and give her a testimony of God’s generosity.”
- “I know of people who babysit to give young families a break.”
- “I know of a ministry here at Bridgeway called ‘Love in Action’ that cooks meals for people in our church who are going through sickness or grief.”

Whether it is a note, a gift bible, a gift certificate, or a meal, when you bless people *practically* and *couple it with the Word of God*, you will encourage their hearts tremendously.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV84

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV84

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The DAY of CHRIST is quickly approaching and judgment day is almost here, friends! This is why we must continue to gather, as Hebrews 10 says. We gather to spur one another on towards love and good deeds. We gather to encourage one another in the faith...

- Church is good for your *health*...
- Church is good for your *hope*...
- Church is good for your *healing*...
- Church is good for your *holiness*...
- Church is even good for your *happiness*...

“Don’t you feel *happier* when you are in the house of the Lord? Let’s keep connecting on Zoom, in small life groups, over coffee in the Real Talk Cafe in Columbia or in the lobby near the fireplace in Owings Mills-Reisterstown. **Bridgeway, we need each other!**”

Practically speaking, here are 3 **PRACTICAL Tips** to be a better encourager:

- **Tip #1 - Choose EMPATHY over Positivity**
- **Tip #2 - Choose HONESTY over Flattery**
- **Tip #3 - Choose PRESENCE over Absence (& problem solving)**

Tip #1 - Choose EMPATHY over Positivity

“Being an encouraging person DOES NOT mean being POSITIVE. Being a positive person is important, but when others need encouragement, they need your *empathy* more than your positivity.”

“They need you to see the negativity of their situation in order to signal to them that you actually understand the depths of their dilemma; their feelings, loss, or injury. When you demonstrate empathy, you are showing the other person that you care enough to feel their pain...WITH them”

Just like we “rejoice with those who rejoice,” as **1 Corinthians 12:26b** states, we must also “suffer with those who suffer,” as **1 Corinthians 12:26a** says.

We can call this the 8th saying of a Gracist - “I will HEAL with you.”

Validate the feelings of pain or injury that the other person is feeling and then you can pivot to the more positive solutions. The true encourager *validates* before he or she *elevates* the situation to higher ground.

Question: How many of you could use work in this area of being more empathetic and sensitive?

Ask God to help you with this if it doesn’t come easy to you!

Tip #2 - Choose HONESTY over Flattery

“Being an encouraging person DOES NOT mean COMPLIMENTING people incessantly.”

“Giving compliments is nice. But there's a difference between giving compliments and giving a word of encouragement. Giving compliments is like giving out candy. Candy tastes good at the moment but has no lasting value, except empty calories.”

Proverbs 31:30 NIV84

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Proverbs 15:4 NIV84

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 28:23 NIV84

He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.

Proverbs 27:6 NIV84

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

If you want your encouragement to have lasting value, then your words need to be like a prepared meal that has forethought and some good ole protein in it! True encouragement has honest weight to it that feels qualitative and meaningful. Being an encouraging person means being HONEST.

Question: How many of you could use work in this area of being more honest and thoughtful in your encouragement?

The word encouragement in the Greek language of scripture can also mean “exhortation.” While it may feel like the word “exhorting” or “exhortation” comes across as “correcting” or “chastising,” it actually means encouragement or even “comfort.” It comes from the word *Para-kaleo* (come near to).

“Encouraging means to come alongside others honestly to give them strength that they may not have on their own, to help influence them in the right and best direction. Encouragement can also mean to “Instill-COURAGE.” Nothing instills courage like honesty!”

“Not brutal honesty; but, as I will teach next week, a brilliant and beloved honesty which *enlightens*.”

TIP #3 - Choose PRESENCE over Absence

“If you do show up, don’t feel the need to go straight into problem-solving...”

Job 2:11-13 NIV84

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

“At least Job’s friends showed up!”

Question: How many of you could use work in this area of showing up for others?

CONCLUSION

Biblical Encouragement is:

1. Purposeful
2. Powerful
3. Practical

3 Tips to be a Better Encourager:

1. Choose Empathy (over Positivity)
2. Choose Honesty (over Flattery)
3. Choose Presence (over Absence & over Problem-solving)

God can help us all in these areas where we can be greater encouragers of one another. It does take work. For some, it is more natural than others. But I promise you it will pay off!

FOURTH & FINALLY...

4. Biblical Encouragement Helps us to PERSEVERE

1 Thessalonians 4:16 NIV84

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, ENCOURAGE each other with these words.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers [and sisters], stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

As your pastor, brother, and friend, I say unto you, I exhort you, I encourage you:

KEEP GOING!

KEEP THE FAITH!

DON'T GIVE UP!

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!

YOU'VE COME TOO FAR TO TURN BACK NOW!

And one day we can all say like the Apostle Paul...

2 Timothy 4:6-8 NIV84

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day—and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.