

Encouragement: FUNDAMENTAL OR FLUFF?

SECTION 2: HINDRANCES TO BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT

I. Hindrances to Biblical Encouragement

A. Unaware (never having studied encouragement from God's point of view)

1. It is my prayer that what we have looked at today has given you a new or strengthened Biblical conviction on exactly what it is that God requires of us when He commands us to "encourage one another."

B. Prideful control

1. One of my issues was rooted in foolishly believing that somehow I could control change in the members of my family.
2. In essence I was choosing "my way" of attempting to change their behaviors, instead of God's way.
3. My job was and is to follow His path and do things His way, trusting Him to keep His promise that the good work He has begun in my family, He will complete.

C. Arrogance/self-focus (It's all about me.)

1. Basically, "my way in my time"
2. Doing things God's way often requires patiently and faithfully waiting for God to move in the lives of my family in His way and His timing, which is perfect.
3. Being constantly "on them" about everything seemed a lot more expedient than resting and trusting in God and being content with His way and His time.
4. Taking time to encourage and build up and using sweet and gentle speech to communicate to them how God was at work in them seemed to waste valuable time, whereas barking orders and requiring immediate change and obedience seemed way more efficient.
5. Not only was my perspective selfish and self-focused, it was also foolish. When we choose our agenda instead of God's, we are far less likely to see the fruits of righteousness we desire. And if we begin in unrighteousness, we cannot expect to reap righteousness in those around us.

D. Self-Righteousness

1. Anytime our hearts are motivated by an "I would never do that...what is wrong with them?" thought, there is probably self-righteousness lurking in our hearts.
2. When we find self-righteousness in our motivation, what we have most likely lost sight of is how graciously and patiently God has always dealt with us.
3. We have forgotten that all that we have and all that we are is because of God's grace at work in us and its tremendous, life-transforming power.
4. When this happens, we are no longer operating from a humble, grateful, Gospel-centered heart that knows that all that has been accomplished in us is attributable to our gracious and merciful God and not to ourselves.

E. Ungratefulness to God

1. Self-focus and self-righteousness usually go hand in hand with an ungratefulness to God.
2. In that case there is a good chance we have forgotten that all that God has done for us has never been deserved.

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3. On the other hand, a heart that has remained aware of the overwhelming and undeserved gifts that God has poured out on our lives tends to be a heart that loves to extend the same to others.
- F. Stinginess/Lacking a generous spirit
1. God is a lavish and ecstatic giver. He is never stingy or miserly.
 2. **Luke 6:38** says, **"give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap."**
 3. Although often quoted as referring to the giving of money, this verse actually comes in the midst of Jesus urging us to love our enemies and keep away from uncharitably judging others. In this case, it has far more to do with loving generously than it does with giving away money
 4. Encouraging others in a Biblical manner, and with constancy and a cheerful, lavish spirit is an appropriate and excellent application of this verse.
- G. Laziness
1. Encouragement, on the other hand, does not come naturally. It takes a boatload of grace from God, partnered with a heart willing to work at it.
 2. It also requires a humble heart...like that of a child...that is willing to start small at learning a new thing and trust that God will give the increase.
- H. Busyness
1. Often, because I did not understand the foundational importance of Biblical encouragement, I did not prioritize it.
 2. After I began to understand it's great value, I was far more willing and able to make it the priority it should be.
- I. Failing to recognize that my success or failure at being a Biblical encourager was directly connected to the image of God I was painting.
1. What effect was my lack of encouragement having on my witness to my family and to the world around me? This is a critical concept to grasp if we want to point others to Jesus and help them see Him through our lives.
 2. We tell people we want to be like Jesus. If we are people who spend most of our words either refusing to build others up or—worse yet—being constantly critical toward them, it is not unreasonable for them to assume that God must also be indifferent or constantly critical as well!
 3. But if we are people who are constantly commending others and building them up, extremely lavish and generous in our encouragement, then it would also be reasonable for them to assume, "This must be what God is like!"
 4. In this way, we may either cast a dark shadow on the character of God or we may image Him in a brilliant way. In a way, we can choose to either lie about who He is or tell the truth. Let's resolve to tell the truth about what He is like and paint a winsome and compelling picture of who He is.

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- II. Remember the Savior. Remember the Gospel at work in us.
 1. **Romans 8:1 - There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**
God may want to bring you some sweet conviction on this, but His motive in that is to move in close to forgive you and pour the grace into your soul that you need.
 2. After having bought us with a HUGE price, delivering us from the dominion of darkness and transferring us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, and making us into new creations, He then said that with Himself He would also FREELY give us ALL THINGS.
 3. In counseling, my husband, Pete, often says that all of us face moments when we need a "new chip." If we aren't naturally empathetic, then we can ask God for that "new chip" in order to become more empathetic like He is. If we stink at being organized, then we can ask Him for a new "organizational chip."
 4. **Colossians 1:15-17**
 5. Jesus stands completely willing and infinitely able...and even longingly desirous...for us to ask Him to create in us a "new chip" for Biblical encouragement. There is no bottom to His supply of generosity in giving grace of this kind.

Individual Application:

Perhaps you need to hand your burden over to the Lord...and that could be a burden concerning Biblical encouragement or it may be something else. Perhaps you need to cry out to God for help. Perhaps you want to repent. Whatever is pressing on you right now, we want to encourage you to respond to the Holy Spirit and come to Jesus. We're going to have an extended time of ministry now so that you can do just that. Feel free to sing and pray at your seat or with a neighbor. We will also have some ladies down front who would love to pray for you in case you are feeling the need for that. In whatever way is helpful, let's draw near to our Savior.