

## *Encouragement*: FUNDAMENTAL OR FLUFF?

### SECTION 3: PRACTICAL HELPS

#### I. Practical Helps

- A. What might Biblical encouragement look like in an ordinary day?
1. My passion is to begin with family first. If you're single or if family might be a tough place to start, then I would choose closest friends to begin with.
  2. Dinnertime was where we started off as a family.
  3. Pete would pick one of us and say, "Tonight we're going to share evidences of grace with Tim." After doing a little instructing on what "evidences of grace" were and what "Biblical encouragement" is, he just had us go around the table, having each person share one way they saw God at work in Tim. Each night it was a different person.
  4. This can also be a helpful practice to help two siblings that aren't getting along. Stop the action and have each child encourage the other in this manner. If that hasn't cooled down the heat, do another round.
- B. Mechanical at first
1. Learning to do this is a step out in humility. It's humbling to admit that we're not good at something...especially something that is important to God! It's further humbling to have to begin and feel and sound so awkward. It was for me! But remember, **James 4:6, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**
  2. Be willing to ask for help from those who excel. I also believe this blesses the Lord and honors Him.
- C. Many forms
1. The Biblical principle is clear, but it can take many forms. When you take a moment to pray for a person, you are in essence encouraging them to look to Jesus and run to Jesus for help.
  2. If you take a meal to someone who desperately needs the practical help that it provides, you are reminding them that God delights to provide our needs and that He often uses our family of believers to accomplish that.
  3. If you know a young mom is drowning in her sea of little blessings and hasn't had a moment to spend with the Lord in quite a while, you can watch her children and give her time to get out and have some quiet time with Jesus.
  4. So...there are many ways to build someone up and encourage them to see God's love.
  5. Today we're talking about just one, but it is a very significant one: Seeing God at work in someone and verbally communicating that to them. For whatever reason, though, I believe this is the one that most often gets left behind. We are far better, in my view, of serving others in practical ways, and weaker at this way.
  6. And yet, this is such a powerful way. One reason I believe it is so powerful is that it very directly puts us in touch with the Gospel, which the Bible says **"is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." (Romans 1:16)** The Gospel is where the power is. It is a power we needed for the regeneration part of salvation, and it is the power we need for the ongoing sanctification part of our salvation. We need this power every single day.
  7. The problem is that we are very forgetful about how available this power is to us. Encouraging each other in this special way enables us to remind each other.

## *Encouragement:* FUNDAMENTAL OR FLUFF?

8. Jesus reminds us that I don't have to walk through anything alone. He has always met us. He will always meet us. And that same reality...the reality of the Savior and the Gospel in our lives...has the power to help us trust God to turn whatever ashes we may be facing into beauty.

### D. New Beginnings

#### 1. Cultivate eyes to see God's grace

- a. I tended to be a true skeptic in this. I was always looking for ulterior motives. Leave the judgment of that to God. It will help open your eyes wider to His grace at work.
- b. Ask God for help in this. Make it a regular part of your prayer time to ask God to help you see with His eyes.

2. Remember: The format isn't important. The content is. I can be a person who can try to be so careful to do something just exactly right that I lose sight of the forest for the trees. You might not identify it exactly right at first. But just make sure there is a heart of love behind it and that in the end you've communicated that you see that God is at work in them.

#### 3. Make a list of people who are your top priorities to encourage:

- a. Make your list in priority order

1. Husband
2. Children
3. Grandchildren
4. Parents
5. Friends
6. Other family members
7. Pastors
8. Life Group Leader
9. Neighbors
10. Coworkers

- b. Even though you may end up with a long list, don't feel you have to eat the elephant in one bite. Start with just your husband and children, or with your top couple of names.

#### 4. Daily goals

- a. Set daily goals for yourself. At the beginning, I started with one encouragement for Pete and one for one of my children each day. That's all I could do.
- b. Decide what you can do and then just begin.
- c. Don't add until you're feeling stronger in your skill. Even then, add slowly.

#### 5. Some ideas we used for beginning were:

- a. Notebook Exchange
- b. Mailbox
- c. Little notes left in strategic places for my husband
- d. Everyday conversation

## *Encouragement:* FUNDAMENTAL OR FLUFF?

- e. Dinner table
  - f. Family night activity
6. A few examples:
- a. Let's say your husband works all day on the dental insurance you now need. You could say, "Thanks for doing that, honey." Or you could say, "Honey, Jesus is using your kindness and willingness to do that to help me know that He's with me and compassionate toward me in this trial. It's helped me so much today. Thank you."
  - b. When your 2-year old comes and asks for a cookie, then pauses, and asks for one for his older brother too you could just say, "Oh honey, that's so kind of you!" But you could also say, "My sweet boy. I am seeing Jesus at work in your heart right now. He is the most generous person ever! And right now He is helping you be just like him!"
  - c. Let's say your 11-year-old just is not getting a math concept. Whether you teach him at home or are helping him with work he's brought home from school, you have tried to explain it ten times in a different way to help him get it, but he's just not there yet and he is plenty frustrated. He's fussed and complained and acted in a whole lot of ways that aren't good...but he's hung in there through the entire ordeal and is, in fact, still sitting there listening to you talk! You could end the moment with a correction for all he's done wrong...and you may need to. But first, you could say, "Honey, I know this has been a hard, hard lesson for you. And I know it is very frustrating to try and try and still not get it. But I see God giving you courage and strength to keep listening and trying, and I know He is pleased with your work and effort and so am I. He is the one who knows all things, so let's just stop right now and pray and ask him to help us both to be able to understand how to do these problems."
  - d. Your 10-year-old just socked your 8-year-old but good. After all has been explained, it is clear that both boys will need to be disciplined, but in all the explanations you did hear that your 10-year-old really tried to work the conflict out as he had been taught and when that didn't work, even asked that they both go get Mom. Your 8-year-old would not comply and the shoving began. So, when you take your 10-year-old son in to be disciplined, you stop first and say, "Jon, you are going to be disciplined because you didn't stop the conflict, but perpetuated it by socking your brother. But I see Jesus in you in the fact that you tried to work it out and even appealed for getting me involved. Son, you are learning to respond to the Holy Spirit in the midst of conflict, which is very difficult. And you looked to God to help you, and He did. I am so proud of you and grateful to God who is at work in you. Unfortunately, in the end you did let your anger get the better of you and hit your brother, so let's have a discipline."

### **Individual Application:**

For the next 20 minutes we would like you to pick two or three women around you and huddle up. Brainstorm on other ideas as to how you can begin to encourage those around you. Take the last few minutes to pray for one another on this subject. After that we will close with a short time of worship before Deb closes us.