

Encouragement: FUNDAMENTAL OR FLUFF?

SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

SECTION 1: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ENCOURAGEMENT?

I. What does the Bible say about encouragement?

A. Being as honest with yourself as you possibly can be, what is your true current opinion on encouragement? Are giving or receiving encouragement essential elements in the growth of a Christian? In your growth as a Christian?

B. Defining Biblical encouragement

1. *Parakaleo* is the Greek work translated "encourage" in our Bibles, and it means "to call to one's side, to urge, to encourage, or to comfort."
2. *Parakletos* is the Greek word used by John in his gospel for the Holy Spirit being our "advocate" or our "helper."
3. When we are commanded to "encourage one another," we are being invited to join the Holy Spirit in His ministry to come alongside the saints as helper and comforter.
4. The ministry of Biblical encouragement carries with it the sense of strengthening or building up.
5. Biblical encouragement is not just complimenting someone or flattering them.
6. **Biblical encouragement has as its focal point and goal the intention of drawing a person's gaze toward God and specifically helping them to see where He is at work in their life. It's connecting that person to God. It's coming alongside them and strengthening them by helping them to see God at work in and through them. It's imitating the Holy Spirit by advocating for them and building them up. Encouragement is helping the receiver to detect the evidences of God's grace in their life so that they will have courage to take the next step in their journey with God, knowing that that same grace will be there as it already has been.**
7. Two quotes by Dave York (our Sovereign Grace pastor in Roseburg, Oregon) that I have found very helpful are these,
 - o "While Biblical encouragement does connect me to you, the far more important work it does is connect you to God."
 - o "Biblical Encouragement is both giving courage to trust God and instilling confidence in God to act. It is not about making your friend feel good. It is about connecting them to the Lord and His grace."

C. What does the Bible say about encouragement?

1. What does God call Himself?

- o **Romans 15:5 - May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus...**

If God himself wants to be known as a "God of encouragement," then we who follow God and want to image Him should be known as people of encouragement as well.

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2. In looking at the following scriptures, how important would you say encouragement was to the early church?
 - **Acts 15:32 - And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.**
 - **Acts 16:40 - So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.**
 - **Acts 18:27 - And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed...**
 - **Acts 20:2 - When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.**

3. What do the apostle Paul and the writer of the book of Hebrews have to say about encouragement?
 - **Romans 1:11-12 - For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.**
 - **Ephesians 6:21-22 - So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.**
 - **I Thessalonians 2:11-12 - For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.**
 - **I Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**
 - **Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**
 - **Hebrews 3:13 - But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (NIV)**

4. One word from the Old Testament
 - **Proverbs 14:1 - The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.**

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We can tear down our homes by commission, but we can also tear them down by omission. The prevalence of criticism can certainly tear down our homes and our families. But the absence of Biblical encouragement can also tear them down

II. My story

1. In almost every case, even though Paul would soon address some pretty serious sin in the lives of the churches he was writing to, he still began each letter with two things: **lavish communication of affection for them and lavish communication of encouragement to them in the form of evidences of the grace of God he saw at work in their lives.**
2. I believe Biblical encouragement is far from being just so much fluff. I believe it is absolutely fundamental in the lives of BOTH THE GIVER AND THE RECEIVER.

III. It is God's way

1. **Psalm 103:7 - He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.**
2. Being able to discern God's works is a gift that has been granted to all people (**Romans 1:19-20**). But making known His ways to Moses represents a far greater intimacy with God than just being able to see His acts. We don't want to just know His acts, we want to also know His ways so that we can have that intimacy with Him as well and know Him better.
3. In **Isaiah 55:9** God states the following truth: **"...as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."**
4. But it takes a while of walking with God to really begin to understand what that means. For example: When God gives us the longing for something, like a spouse or a child or a house or a certain position or calling, but then asks us to wait patiently until He—in His perfect wisdom and timing—chooses to provide it, we don't really understand. In our newness to God and our immaturity, we can see His delay as cruel or unkind. That's because we have not yet learned God's ways and we don't understand them.
5. After we walk along with Him for a while, reading His Word and communing with Him, we come to see that this is OFTEN God's way with His people: to ask them to wait before they receive. We begin to see the wisdom and kindness in it.
6. This ministry of encouragement is one of God's ways. It can feel foreign to us and seem counterintuitive. But His way is higher. He knows that in order to continue moving forward in our walk with Him and to take the next step, we must lay hold of His grace. In order to lay hold of it, we must be able to see it at work in our lives.
7. We can agree with God's higher and wiser way and get good at seeing His grace and at communicating that work to others. We can join with the Holy Spirit in His role of helping and supporting and coming alongside us.

IV. Biblical examples

A. Paul

1. **I Corinthians 11:17-22** and **I Corinthians 1:1-9**
2. **Colossians 2:8, 20-23** and **Colossians 1:3-8**

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B. The Revelation to the Apostle John

1. **Revelation 2:1-5**
2. **Revelation 2:12-14**
3. **Revelation 2:18-20**

Individual Application:

Gather in groups of two or three with the women seated near you and succinctly share what you would like to have prayer for, then go ahead and pray for one another. If it has to do with this topic, great; if it's something else, that's great too.