

Renew – Encouragement

In the early church, believers were going through difficult days. They were being pursued by the Jews and by the Romans for their faith in Christ. Many of their fellow believers were martyred for their faith. Many women were left to be widows and there were many orphans. They were stoned, killed with the sword, and cut in half. They were destitute, oppressed and mistreated. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. Saul of Tarsus was one of many that consented to the persecution of those early believers. One day, while he was going to carry out more persecutions, the LORD Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus. He was set aside by God to carry the message of Christ to the Gentiles.

After being called by the LORD, Saul spent three years in Arabia before returning to Jerusalem. When he returned, everyone was against him. The Jews plotted to kill him and the disciples did not believe that he had turned to the LORD Jesus Christ. God prepared a man named Joseph, who was a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), (Acts 4:36). Barnabas took Saul in and ultimately brought him to the apostles, (Acts 9:26-27).

Everyone needs a word of encouragement spoken over their life.

Nothing is as refreshing as having words of kindness and encouragement. It is amazing how a word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Some of you have gone through some very difficult situations and you need a word of encouragement. Today is a day for you to receive special kindness and encouragement in the LORD.

In Acts 3, Peter found a man who was begging for pennies.

Peter looked intently at the man and said, “Silver and gold have I none, but I give you what I have.” Obviously, Peter and John were in the same financial condition as most of the early church. They did not have a penny to give the man, but they had something that everyone can afford to give. Their gift not only encouraged the man, it changed his life. Peter said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

Philemon was known as a great encourager.

He constantly was sharing love and faith, and his kindness often refreshed the hearts of God’s people, (Philemon 4-7). He was the kind of man who provoked an attitude of gratitude.

Everyone needs the gift of encouragement.

You need to give yourself some encouragement.

David and his men were filled with grief because their wives, sons and

daughters had been carried away from Ziklag by the Amalekites, (1 Samuel 6). Everything they owned was either burned up or taken away. David and his mighty men were so overwhelmed and distressed that they lifted their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep. In addition to that, all of those mighty men turned against him and spoke of stoning him. At one of his lowest moments, David strengthened and encouraged himself in the LORD his God. When life was against him, David encouraged himself in the LORD. What do you say to yourself when you are in trouble? What do you say to yourself when you have suffered loss? What do you say when everyone has turned against you? David encouraged and strengthened himself in the LORD.

If you feel you are standing alone or you are going through a difficult time, you need to encourage yourself in the LORD.

Start rehearsing and reminding yourself that God loves you and is on your side.

Listen to David's confessions.

Psalms 27:1 He said: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid."

Psalms 35:10 "The Lord is my strength and my shield, My heart trusted in Him and I am helped."

Psalms 91:2 "The Lord is my refuge and my fortress."

Psalms 118:6 "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Psalms 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalms 16:8 He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

You need to learn and know the Lord your God. Encourage and strengthen yourself in the Lord your God. God made you to be uniquely you! Your fingerprint, eyes and voice are uniquely distinctive. You are one of a kind.

Psalms 139:14 says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

God created and made you as you are. Jesus Christ not only died to save the world, He came to seek and to save you. God loves you. This is hard for some people to understand.

Place yourself in the middle of John 3:16.

The world that God loved includes you. You need to forgive yourself for past failures and imperfections.

We are often our worst enemy.

You need to have a little talk with yourself and change your narrative.

Stop beating yourself up for your past failure and stop repeating all of the negative things that go through your mind. God is going to take you to something better. He can make a way where there is no way. What you are going through is not your destination.

You need to encourage yourself in the LORD. Ask God for help with the things you cannot change and change the things you can. As long as you have breath and life, there is hope. You may not be perfect. In fact you may be flawed, but God still loves you and will help you.

You can become the Son of Encouragement in your house. Tell yourself, "The God that I serve is Almighty God." "The Lord my God is fighting my battles." "The Lord my God is my Deliverer and my Healer." Start making plans to come out of your discouragement and difficulty.

There is one more thing you can do that will encourage you – become an encourager.

Do you know someone that needs encouragement? Nothing boosts you more than helping someone that needs encouraging. It is amazing how much better you will feel when you lift someone else up. We need to give the gift of encouragement to those near us.

Let's start at home.

Give encouragement to your companion.

No one can encourage you more than the one who loves you most. Your spouse needs to know that you love them. In addition to love, they need your encouragement.

If you have a husband, you need to encourage him.

Praise him for the good things you see in his life. Root for him when he is in trouble and encourage him when he has a heavy load. Try to overlook his imperfections and deficiencies. Give him the gift of encouragement.

Wives need appreciation.

Dr. James Dobson wrote a book about what wives wished their husbands knew without asking. He says that a wife's greatest need is a sense of good self-esteem. This primarily comes through her husband.

How long has it been since you expressed appreciation to your wife?

Let her know what she means to you with words of appreciation. Do random acts of kindness and tenderness for her. Give the gift of encouragement to your wife.

Your children and grandchildren need more encouragement than they need criticism.

In his book "The Youth Builder," Jim Burns says: "*It takes nine affirming*

comments to undo the negative effect on one critical comment.”

One of the worse things that can be done against children is being overly critical. We are living in a very negative world and your children and grand-children need an extra amount of encouragement.

Learn how to give the gift of encouragement. Invest yourself in finding their interests and needs. Sit down and talk to them. Have a lighthearted evening with your children. Tell them how awesome they are. Encourage them to reach their highest potential.

Do you remember how “perfect” you were as a child?

Do not expect your children to be perfect. As a parent, you have the greatest influence over the early development of your children. Most children don’t know what to do with their life. They have emotions they don’t know how to cope with. They face problems they don’t know how to solve. They have uncontrolled passions and desires. With just a little encouragement, prayer and positive reinforcement they will blossom to become all that God has created them to be.

Give encouragement to outsiders.

Sometimes the person you least expect needs encouragement the most. Include everyone and exclude no one.

Practice random acts of kindness.

Do some unexpected kindness to someone you don’t know. Stop keeping score of all you do.

You can give encouragement by words of respect and approval.

I was in the grocery store the other day and observed a clerk get a chewing out from an unhappy customer. The customer was very rude, but the clerk responded very calmly and with kindness. After the customer left, I said to her: “I am so impressed at the way you handled yourself and that situation.” She looked me in the eye and said: “Thank you. You are the first person ever to give me a compliment in this store!”

Practice saying “Thank you!” Learn how to say: “That was an awesome job!”

You can give the gift of encouragement with words of recognition.

At times individuals perform above the call of duty. This takes place in your church, community, and nation. You can give the gift of encouragement by recognizing unselfish giving.

Resist the urge to criticize.

Do any of you remember a time that criticism made you feel better? Being critical solves nothing but it contributes to the anger and distrust in our world. How many times have you criticized someone and had them

reply: *"Thank you so much for pointing out my flaws. I really appreciate it?"*

Next time you start to be critical, stop.

Catch yourself and say something positive and good.

Everyone here can give the gift of encouragement.

Luke 6:31-35 NIV84 Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

John 15:12 NKJV This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Even if your resources are limited, you can become a son or daughter of encouragement.

The early church had its encouragers.

Philemon went to Paul in one of the darkest times of his life.

Paul said: *"I myself have gained much joy and comfort from your love, my brother."*

Joseph, was called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement).

He sold his land to provide the money to encourage those who were suffering. Barnabas found and brought Saul of Tarsus to the church in Antioch. Barnabas encouraged the Apostles in Jerusalem to accept Paul into the fellowship. When Paul had been stoned and left for dead, Barnabas encouraged him. Barnabas was sent to new believers in Antioch. When the congregation had broken up, Paul and Barnabas persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. When no small dissension and dispute was within the church at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were sent. Barnabas had the ministry of encouragement. Paul loved having Barnabas around.

Any one of you can become a Son or Daughter of Encouragement.

Barnabas did much to be one. Peter and John did not have money, but they gave what they could to encourage and bring healing to the lame man.

You can be an encourager.