“Encouragement is Catchy!”

2 Corinthians 7:13-16
8/14/2011

Introduction:

- ***Spread encouragement by encouraging others!***

How can I be an encouragement to my brothers/sisters in Christ?

I. You spread encouragement by giving <u>Spiritual Refreshment</u> to others (v.13)

II. You spread encouragement by <u>Expressing Confidence</u> in others (v.14,16)

III. You spread encouragement by <u>Demonstrating Obedience</u> to others (v.15a)

IV. You spread encouragement by <u>Offering Receptivity</u> to others (v.15b)

“Encouragement is Catchy!”

2 Corinthians 7:13-16

8/14/2011

Introduction:

- ***Spread encouragement by encouraging others!***

How can I be an encouragement to my brothers/sisters in Christ?

I. You spread encouragement by giving _____ to others (v.13)

II. You spread encouragement by _____ in others (v.14,16)

III. You spread encouragement by _____ to others (v.15a)

IV. You spread encouragement by _____ to others (v.15b)

“Encouragement is Catchy!”

2 Corinthians 7:13-16

8/14/2011

Introduction:

Things that spread:

1) Germs/viruses/AIDS/ STD’s
2) Fire (starts small; perhaps as a spark)
3) Fads/trends
4) Idea/philosophies
5) Bad attitudes/negative criticism can have an evil affect on people’s impressionable minds)

Encouragement spreads!

For example: the TV commercial which showed one kind deed motivating another kind deed, etc.

Encouragement lifts the spirit and expels negative feelings of depression. Encouragement is really an incentive or motivation to increased faith. The Christian’s encouragement really leads people to increased trust and confidence in God. Such positive reinforcement is especially needed at such a time as this when our world’s system seems to have its guns pointed at all semblances of Godly virtue, morals, and ethics.

"Encouragement" = parakaleo - lit. "to call alongside." It refers to a comforter (EX: Holy Spirit) or one who is by your side to encourage and exhort you.

Prov. 12:25 - "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."

In a society filled with chaos, pressures from all angles, heartaches, loneliness, all of us need someone who cares. Not one of us is beyond the need of an occasional uplift. When the pressures are on, we all need someone who will serve as the relief valve (Robert Roster, The Ministry of Encouragement, "The Challenge," Colorado Springs)

"Encouragement is the inspiration that one man gives to another by his words, actions, spirit and hope." (Foster, P. 3)

“Encouragement”

I saw them tearing a building down,
A gang of men in a dusty town.
With a “yo heave ho” and a lusty yell,
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.

I asked the foreman if these men were as skilled
As the men he’d hire, if he were to build.
He laughed and said, “Oh, no, indeed.
Common labor is all I need.”

For those men can wreck in a day or two,
What builders had taken years to do.
I asked myself as I went my way,
Which kind of role am I to play?

Am I the builder who build with care,
Measuring life by the rule and square?
O am I the wrecker who walks the town,
Content with the role of tearing down?
(Green, p. 118)

Bear Bryant, one of the greatest college football coaches ever, when he was pushed to explain his philosophy of coaching, said: There’s just three things I ever say [to my players]: ‘If anything goes bad, then *I* did it. If anything goes semi-good, then *we* did it. If anything goes real good, then *you* did it.’ That’s all it takes to get people to win football games for you. I can do that better than anybody.” (Green, Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, p. 118)

- ***Spread encouragement by encouraging others!***

How can I be an encouragement to my brothers/sisters in Christ?

I. You spread encouragement by giving <u>Spiritual Refreshment</u> to others (v.13)

"Comforted" - encouraged (from *parakaleoi)*

"We were comforted in your comfort" – The Corinthians' encouragement was an encouragement to Paul and his associates. The comfort they received from God after their <u>repentance</u> (7:7-12) had pleasant, soothing effect on the man of God, who loved them and was concerned for their spiritual well-being.

Mother sets the mood in the home; if mom is not happy, then nobody is happy. However, if all is well with Mom, then the whole family is set at ease with an air of emotional stability.

Katherine, the wife of Martin Luther, dramatically revived the depressed Reformer's confidence in God's providence.
This event has been written in a poem by F. W. Herzberger:

One day when skies loomed the blackest,
This greatest and bravest of men
Lost heart and in an oversad spirit
Refused to take courage again.

Neither eating or drinking nor speaking
To anxious wife, children or friends,
Till Katherine dons widow garments
And deepest of mourning pretends.

Surprised, Luther asked why she sorrowed.
"Dear Doctor," his Katie replied,
"I have cause for the saddest of weeping,
For God in His heaven has died!"

Her gentle rebuke did not fail him,
He laughingly kissed his wise souse,
Took courage, and banished his sorrow,
And joy again reigned in the house.

(Green, p. 119-20)

Paul, in verse 13, picks up on a thought that he had begun in 7:6-7. The repentance of the Corinthians brought comfort to Titus, and Titus brought this comfort back to Paul.

"It was a refreshed, energized, buoyant Titus" who brought encouragement to Paul in Macedonia. There was the "Titus touch" that transmitted encouragement from Corinth to Paul in Macedonia (R. Kent Hughes, p. 153).

"God's comfort very often comes though the instrumentality of others. . . we must be sensitive to God's Spirit so we can minister the golden touch – so some will sense that the hand was yours, but it was the hand of God – that the kindness was yours, but it was also the kindness of God – that the voice was yours but it was the consolation of God . . . be His instrument now (R. Kent Hughes, p. 154).

ILLUS: The Song: "I Saw Jesus in You."

Paul had joy because Titus had joy by the Corinthians who refreshed His spirit.

Corinthians ----- Titus ----- Paul ----- You and me.

Joy is catchy! Have you ever how just the cheerful countenance of someone brings out a smile on the face of others.

When you think of someone in the Bible who imparted rich encouragement to others you think obviously of Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37, 9:26-27, 11:22-30, 15:36-40). Barnabas' real name was Joseph, but the apostles noted the characteristic of encouragement about him, so they nicknamed him "Barnabas" (an Aramaic word), which means "son of encouragement." Barnabas was one who lived up to his name.

II. You spread encouragement by <u>Expressing Confidence</u> in others (v.14,16)

v. 14

Just as bad attitudes are catchy, so are joyful attitudes. What attitude will we allow to flow from our lives today?

Note: When virtue flows, it will have far-reaching effects into the future – a domino effect.

EX: The positive attitude of Andre Nelson has had a far-reaching impact on many. I receive phone calls from people who visited us from far-away places who were impacted by the cheerful countenance and encouraging words of brother Andre.

No matter how you feel, you can still be a blessing and refresh the spirit of someone else.

I don't always live on an emotional high. But even when I am in a valley, I don't have to ruin the day for others by wearing my negative emotions "on my sleeve."

It is not being a hypocrite when you feel low but you still show a cheerful countenance; rather you show great trust in God and great love for others whom you do not want to in anyway impact negatively.

True, there is a time for mourning, but something is wrong with someone who mourns 24/7, 365 days a year!

Despite the Corinthians plethora of problems, Paul had confidence in them. He actually said things to Titus about them that were problem to be true.

Love "believeth all things" (I Cor. 13)

Love is slow to suspect, quick to trust and to expect the bets from God's people.

It's not that our confidence is in people, but our confidence is in the God of people.

It has been said that it takes five encouraging statements to offset one negative criticism. Whether that equation is accurate or not, I do not know. I do know that our God has given us thousands of encouraging promises, and if we were like God, we would allow the *Paraclete* to do more encouraging through us.

We must learn to praise our children more, to show appreciation for their steps of progress and achievement, to encouraging any sight of initiative.

I have always tried to make it a practice to encourage any positive traits in my kids and to carry that over into the lives of many of your kids.

Evangelist Bill Glass asked a group of a thousand prison inmates, "How many of you had parents who told you that you would end up in prison one day?" Almost every one of the inmates raised his hand.

When he was a young boy, the great painter Benjamin West decided to paint a picture of his sister while his mother was not at home. He got out the bottles of ink and started, but soon he had an awful mess. His mother eventually returned and of course saw the mess. Instead of scolding him, she picked up the portrait and declared, "What a beautiful picture of your sister!" Then she kissed him. Later in life he said, "With that kiss I became a painter." (Green, p. 119)

v. 16
Paul's complete confidence in the Corinthians gave him reason to rejoice! In chapters 8 & 9 Paul will appeal to his confidence in the Corinthians stated desire to give and meet the financial needs of those saints who were suffering in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3) (cp. Paul's confidence in their stated desire to give – in 2 Cor. 9:2-5).

III. You spread encouragement by <u>Demonstrating Obedience</u> to others (v.15a)

v. 15
"His (Titus') inward affection" (inner feelings of the heart) was even far greater as he remembered their <u>obedience</u> to the will of God (as revealed by Paul).

A Christian's obedience to God's will and Word perhaps is the greatest source of encouragement.
3 John 1:4
I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Children, do you want to encourage your dad and mom? Then obey them and obey God. Nothing will discourage them more than for you to not turn out right.

Proverbs 19:26
He that wasteth *his* father, *and* chaseth away *his* mother, *is* a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.
Whenever we hear of a Christian living in sin, our hearts are struck with pain; but oh, how wonderful the heart feels when repentance occurs and sin is denounced. Your righteous living is perhaps the greatest contribution you can make to the cause of Christ!

Others will follow in your steps. They will either be encouraged to live for God because of your obedience, or discouraged to live for God because of your disobedience. What mark will you leave behind?

IV. You spread encouragement by <u>Offering Receptivity</u> to others (v.15b)

Titus was apprehensive as to how the Corinthians would welcome him when he visited their city; but they gave heed to Paul's recommendation and welcomed Titus with great respect and honor (lit. fear and trembling). This glad welcoming of Titus was a tremendous encouragement to this servant of the Lord. How welcoming are we to people God send sour way to visit our church? Perhaps some people never return to our church because they did not feel welcome. We failed to encourage them.

"The phrase 'with fear and trembling' indicates a nervous anxiety to do one's duty" (Plummer, cited by Rogers, p. 407).

The Corinthians honored Paul's command to receive Titus with a great desire to be very welcoming and hospitable.

I have observed over the years how tremendously hospitable those of the Indian culture are, observing their hospitable spirit and giving spirit has been a real lesson to me.

How to be an encourager:

1. Be on the <u>look out</u> (take initiative) for some Christian who needs financial help, a helping hand, or a friend.
   When you see:
   --a <u>need</u>, meet it!
   --a <u>division</u>, mend it!
   --a <u>baby Christian</u>, build him!
   --<u>someone serving</u>, join him!
   --one who as an <u>ex-failure</u>, forgive him and trust God to use him!
   "We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" (Rom. 15:1)
   "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (which is love)" (Gal. 6:2).

2. Make it your goal to specifically encourage at least <u>one</u> person each day. By phone, card, letter, visit (offer words of appreciation, promises to pray).

3. Begin a <u>letter-writing</u> ministry. Brief cards and notes to encourage.

One thing about encouragement is this: It spreads; it's contagious. Your actions will cause a reaction. Your smile helps him/her to smile.

A trusting relationship with God is the bottom line of our being able to encourage others. A lasting source of positive encouragement is not in us.

Keep remembering and claiming His promises.

INVITATION HYMN: "Make Me a Blessing."