

Encouragement and Relating to others

Objective

To explore how offering encouragement is a form of love and something that we are called to do.

References

Holy Scripture

Scriptural Verse

“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Lesson Guidelines

It is easy to discourage someone. We seem to know how to put someone down naturally. Encouragement though is more difficult and some may have the mistaken idea that encouragement is against humility. Others have not had encouragement modeled for them so they assume it is not “our” way.

According to the dictionary, encouragement is: To inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence: to stimulate by assistance, approval, etc.

- ❖ The Greek word which is rendered to encourage is *paraklesis* and its synonyms are: console, exhort, and comfort. A closely related word to encourage is to edify or to build up. Is encouragement against humility? Let’s consider verse 2 of Corinthians 1:3-5.
- ❖ We have value because we are God’s handiwork. He desires that all should know Him and enjoy Him and be saved. We have a role to play in the salvation of others. Let’s consider St. Barnabas, who was an encourager. We first meet him in **Acts 4:32-37**. Sometimes, the thing we have to give back is simply a smile of acceptance or a pat on the back. Regardless of what the gift is, give it and fulfill **Romans 15:1-6, Acts 9:26-28**. Coming alongside someone and bringing them into the group is highly encouraging. Had Barnabas not done this, we may have been given a much shorter Bible. .
- ❖ **Acts 11:19-26**. Barnabas affirmed the good things in others and spoke truth to encourage them to continue in the faith. Encouragers see good and affirm it in others so that the others will continue to mastery or perfection of the goal. Catch someone doing something good and tell them about it!
- ❖ Barnabas sought out St. Paul to bring him to Antioch. Encouragement is intentional; it is not something that happens willy-nilly. Romans 14:19 tells us to **pursue** things that make for peace and edify others.
- ❖ Barnabas also taught God’s truth. One of the biggest encouragements we can give to mankind is to relay God’s truth; His love, His holiness, how sin destroys and the power of His resurrection. It gives acceptance, hope and strength to persevere to the end to those who believe.

Conclusion

We all desire and need encouragement. To be an encourager, fulfill the law of love and share God with others. The best encouragers are those who rightly and humbly stand before the Lord honestly acknowledging their own weaknesses and are then free to be able to see others and where there may be a need for affirmation or support. Let’s remember that there are no

coincidental meetings and no irrelevant people and an act of encouragement can change the course of someone's life.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. How do we feel about bringing someone into the group? Do we look at others as outsiders or potential faithful?
2. Do we look around beyond ourselves and consider what is best in a situation that may not have a direct bearing on us?