

ENCOURAGEMENT

Isa. 42: 3

Defined: That which gives courage, spirit, boldness, confidence, an eagerness to press on, to advance. Because of his weakness, man needs encouragement-help from different sources.

I. God Encourages Man.

1. To the forlorn, the forsaken outcast, he gives a word of comfort (Gen.21:9-22).
2. To the lonely pilgrim on the journey of life, he is a faithful companion (Gen. 28:10-17; Heb. 13:5).
3. To the warrior, fighting the fight of faith, he is strength and a shield (Josh. 1:1-9; Deut. 33:25; 2 Cor. 12:9; Psalm 3:3).
4. To the storm-tossed sailor on the sea of life, he is a light and an assuring voice (Acts 27:22-25).
5. To the enslaved, he gives pardon and release from the bond that binds him (Isa. 40:1, 2).
6. To the bearer of glad tidings, who goes forth at the Conqueror's command, he gives assurance of his abiding presence (Matt. 28:18-20).

II. We Can And Should Encourage One Another.

Surely, if the Lord encourages men, men should encourage each other! Jesus set the example (Text: Isa. 61:1-3). He treated kindly the broken reed and the dimly burning wick (Matt. 9: 1, 2; 14:27; Jn. 8:1-11; 16: 33).

1. The strong should help the weak. Moses, the great statesman, encourage Israel (Ex. 14:10-14; Deut. 31:1-8). All leaders should have the capacity and the desire to inspire the people (Gal. 6:2).
2. The weak should encourage the strong. Moses commanded Israel to encourage Joshua (Deut. 1:28; 3: 28). Jesus craved the sympathetic understanding of his fellows. (Mat 26: 40). No leader is so strong that he can get along without it.
3. The old should encourage the young. David encouraged Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-4). Paul helped young Timothy---assuring him of love and prayers---nothing is more heartening. Love keeps alive---without it men commit suicide (2 Tim. 1:2. 3). Father should deal gently with the child (Col. 3 21).
4. The young should encourage the old or the aged. By honor and obedience (Prov. 10:1). Youth should manifest appreciation for the heritage the older ones have left them.

There are lonely hearts to cherish,
While the days are going by;
There are weary souls who perish,
While the days are going by.
If a smile we can renew,
As our journey we pursue,

Oh, the good we all may do,
As the days are going by.
There's no time for idle scorning,
As the days are going by;
Let your face be like the morning,
As the days are going by.
Oh, the world is full of sighs,
Full of sad and weeping eyes;
Help the fallen brother rise,
As the days are going by.

--Anon.

III. We Can And Should Encourage Ourselves.

1. There is a degree of danger in self-pity, over-sensitiveness. We often expect too much of our fellows. Though we should be childlike, we should never be childish. (1 Cor. 14:20; 16:13; Eph. 6:10).
2. Let us not look for help from without---not too much. Let us seek help from within, also from above. Gladly, we must learn to accept our own responsibility. (1 Sam. 30:6; Acts 16:19-25; Phil. 1:11).
3. Some burdens we must bear alone. (Gal. 6: 5). Blessed is the soldier who bears his own load: He gains power by so doing! Let us not expect others to rear us a pet. When we encourage others, we find gladness of heart. Our duties, not our rights, should be our chief concern. (1 Cor. 13:5).

Illustrations:

The Value of Encouragement

Miss Thompson taught Teddy Stallard in the fourth grade. He was a slow, unkempt student, a loner shunned by his classmates. The previous year his mother died, and what little motivation for school he may have once had was now gone. Miss Thompson didn't particularly care for Teddy either, but at Christmas time he brought her a small present. Her desk was covered with well-wrapped presents from the other children, but Teddy's came in a brown sack. When she opened it there was a gaudy rhinestone bracelet with half the stones missing and a bottle of cheap perfume. The children began to snicker but Miss Thompson saw the importance of the moment. She quickly splashed on some perfume and put on the bracelet, pretending Teddy had given her something special. At the end of the day Teddy worked up enough courage to softly say, "Miss Thompson, you smell just like my mother . . . and her bracelet looks real pretty on you too. I'm glad you like my presents."

After Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and prayed for God's forgiveness. She prayed for God to use her as she sought to not only teach these children but to love them as well. She became a new teacher. She lovingly helped students like Teddy and by the end of the year he had caught up with most of the students.

Miss Thompson didn't hear from Teddy for a long time. Then she received this note: "Dear Miss Thompson, I wanted you to be the first to know. I will be graduating second in my class. Love, Teddy Stallard." Four years later she got another note: "Dear Miss Thompson, They just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I liked it. Love, Teddy Stallard." Four years later: "Dear Miss Thompson, As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I am getting married next month. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now; Dad died last year. Love, Teddy Stallard."

Miss Thompson went to the wedding and sat where Teddy's mother would have sat, because she let God use her as an instrument of encouragement.

OLD AND NEW FRIENDS

Old friends are good friends, so tried and so true,

But old friends are friends you once barely knew.

If friends you would have at the close of the day,

Then be thou a friend to all in the way.

Forget all the slights, watch out for your own,

For self is not king with self on the throne.

When thou art in youth, be friend to the old,

When thou art in years, love youth as pure gold.

Remember the Friend who died on the cross,

Be thou His true friend, whatever the loss.

His friendship is worth the pearl of great price,

His friendship is worth thy life's sacrifice.

And life that is lived devoid of His love,

Has little on earth and nothing above.

Oliver W. Sumerlin Mercedes.

Builder or Wrecker?

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 builds with care,
Measuring life by the rule and square?
Or am I the wrecker who walks the town,
Content with the role of tearing down?

Even Presidents Need Encouragement

Mary Lincoln was the owner of a small box that contained the contents of her grandfather's pockets from the night he was assassinated. These effects were not publicly known until they came into possession of the Library of Congress. One of the items in the pocket of Abraham Lincoln on the occasion of his death was a letter to the editor praising Lincoln for his singleness of purpose. Everyone needs, encouragement, even presidents as great as Lincoln.

Encouragement Is Like Peanut Butter

Encouragement is like a peanut butter sandwich-the more you spread it around, the better things stick together."

Coach Bryant On Encouragement

Said Bear Bryant, one of the greatest college football coaches ever, when he was pushed to explain his philosophy of coaching: "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."