

Encourage Through Relationships

Text : **Philippians 2: 1-4**

INTRODUCTION :

A. We are studying a series on encouragement.

1. At some point in life everyone needs to be encouraged.
 - a. Even the tallest mountain range has more valleys than peaks.
 - b. One may live on a hill, but no one lives on the mountain tops.
2. Even those who are not particularly down can benefit from encouragement.
 - a. An airplane can fly against the wind, but it flies faster with a tailwind.
 - b. Even the most successful of people benefit from positive reinforcement.
3. This is particularly true in the spiritual realm. (*There is no limit to spiritual growth.*)
 - a. Every day, every Christian is like an airplane flying against the winds of Satan.
 - b. Though the sky may be clear today, turbulence and storms are sure to come.

B. Thus, our first lesson demonstrated that we must each one individually develop the ability to weather the storms of life on our own.

1. We observed that Satan tries to isolate us from our spiritual support base and attack.
2. From David's life we learned that our own individual faith gives us great strength.
3. In the N.T. , Bro. Jude instructed us :
 - a. **Jude 20-21** But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.
 - b. He's acknowledging that it takes a conscious, personal effort to build our faith.
4. Instructing the elders of the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul said :
 - a. **Acts 20: 32** – And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
 - b. So, one of the ways that we build up our faith is by spending time in God's word.

C. By our last lesson we learned that each of us has the responsibility to encourage every other Christian.

1. God promised that He would provide a way to overcome every temptation and one of those ways is through the reinforcement of the brethren.
 - a. Compare ... **I Cor 10:13**

- b. God designed the church to be a support group for recovering sinners.
- 2. The ministry of encouragement is fundamental to Christian living.
 - a. **I Thes. 5: 11** – **Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.**
 - b. The Apostle acknowledged that they were doing it and urged them to keep it up.
- 3. In **Eph. 4** we observed that we are placed into the “**Body**” of Christ, **i.e.,** the church.
 - a. In a body every member contributes and every member benefits.
 - b. In the church we must foster interdependence, NOT American style independence.

In our next lesson we will look at some practical ways to go about encouraging, but first we want to use this lesson to emphasize that all encouragement is based on relationship.

I. The relationships that encourage are founded on unity.

A. The unity of Christians is not like the unity of the world.

- 1. The unity of the world is based upon common interests or preferences.
- 2. The world must maintain sameness to maintain unity.
 - a. This unity is based on externals.
 - b. For example, you will never see a gang member dressed like a suburbanite.

B. Christians are bound together at the heart level.

- 1. **Eph. 4: 1-6** **Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.**
- 2. Notice the foundations upon which Christian unity is based.
 - a. Same **body** ... same blood ... interdependent ... same peers (**church**)
 - b. Same **Spirit** ... same seal of ownership ... same attitude / motivation
 - c. Same **hope** ... same destiny ... same anticipation of eternity (**together**)
 - d. Same **Lord** ... same commander ... same purpose in life
 - e. Same **faith** ... same belief system ... same core values
 - f. Same **baptism** ... same birth experience ... same commitment
 - g. Same **God** ... same devotion ... same object of worship ... same love interest

C. Christians are bound together by the word of God.

1. The scriptures teach us of our common heritage. (*Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc.*)
2. The scriptures provide a mutual code of conduct.
3. The scriptures provide us with a unified view of God.

D. Christians are bound together by the same purpose.

1. All Christians are to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us. **I Pet 2: 9**
2. All Christians are to function as ambassadors of Christ on earth. **II Cor 5: 20, Mt 28**

D. It is this unity that enables us to encourage each other.**II. Christian relationships encourage because they are based on mutual surrender.****A. The Christian is totally surrendered to Christ or he is not actually a Christians.**

1. **Luke 14: 26-27** If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
2. **Gal. 2: 20** – I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
3. **II Cor. 5: 15** – He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

B. As we are all surrendered to the same God, so must we be to each other.

1. Vs. – **3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **4** do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
2. In the world, each is seeking his own best interest above others. (*all serve all*)
 - a. In Christ, we seek our own **and** have other people seeking our interest for us.
 - b. It is better to have many seeking our interest than to have just one's self.

C. Seeking the best interest of another requires certain things.

1. One must know what is in the best interest of the other.
2. In order to possess such knowledge, one must :
 - a. learn from the scriptures what is required for spiritual health & strength.
 - b. learn what are the specific needs of his individual brethren.

3. It requires time outside the assembly to acquire such knowledge. (*outings*)
 - a. Sermons and bible classes can only cover a limited amount. (*10% remembered*)
 - b. We learn very little about each other in the assembly. (*proactive – seek good of*)

D. Knowing that others truly have our back enables us to encourage each other.

III. Because Christians count others as more important, we're patient w/ each other.

A. Patience is a fundamental element of love.

1. **I Cor. 13: 4** – Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; ...
2. God is love, so God is patient with us.
 - a. **II Pet. 3: 9** – The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.
 - b. Imagine our circumstances if God was not patient with us.
3. What we receive, we must be willing to give. (*Remember ... Matt. 18: 21-35*)

B. Patience is required of all Christians toward all other Christians.

1. Remember our text from our last lesson ?

I Thes. 5: 14 – We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
2. We are from a variety of different backgrounds.
3. We are all growing at different rates. (*Think about where you were 10 yrs ago.*)

C. Every member of the body is accepted by every other member of the body.

1. Not like receiving an organ transplant ... body fights strange part. (*be welcoming*)
2. God accepts us so He expects us to accept others that He calls.

Rom. 15: 7 – Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
3. We all have areas of weakness so we even accept those who are weak in faith.
 - a. **Rom. 14: 1** – Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.
 - b. We do not have to fear rejection because we have differences of opinion.

*** Though there are areas of opinion, there are areas where we must agree, e. g.,**

- 1) We must all agree that there is one God and that He is revealed in the bible.
- 2) We must all agree that Jesus is the Christ the Only Begotten Son of God.
- 3) We must all believe that Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin, arose and ascended.

- D. Encouragement will only be accepted from those one feels accepts him and will not reject him if he opens up to express his heart. (*the worldly mask*)

IV. Christians can encourage each other because they empathize with each other.

A. All of us must battle the temptations of the devil.

1. **Eph. 6: 10-17** describes our life on earth as a war.
2. **I Cor. 10: 13** explains that temptations are “**common to man.**”
3. **James 1: 14** teaches us why we are all tempted ... we all live in flesh.

B. Not only are we all tempted, we all yield to some temptations.

1. That is to say, we all lose battles against Satan.
 - a. There is not a righteous man under the sun. ... **Rom. 3: 10**
 - b. Because every single person sins. ... **Rom. 3: 23**
2. Every Christian sins.
 - a. **I John 1: 6f** ... We cannot deny that we lose battles against temptations.
 - b. **Rom. 7: 14f** ... The inspired Apostles still struggled to overcome sin.
 Vss ... **18-19** **For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.**
19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

C. Thus, when we encourage each other it is with the knowledge that we are not doing so from a position of superiority, but one of empathy.

1. **Gal. 6: 1-3** **Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**
2. Because every Christian struggles and every Christian sometimes loses, every Christians must be both giving and receiving encouragement.
 - a. This is required to “**fulfill the law of Christ.**”
 - b. Therefore, it rises to the level of an essential.
 - 1) Encouragement and admonition is **not an opinion.**
 - 2) They are also **not optional.**

D. Thus, it is essential to maintain an empathetic relationship to encourage brethren to encourage each other in the faith.

CONCLUSION :**A. We understand that Christians must encourage each other.**

1. The church must cultivate a relationship between its members which fosters a nurturing and encouraging atmosphere.
2. Such a loving atmosphere as this doesn't just happen, it's built over time.
3. The assembly is important, but the close supportive atmosphere requires more.
 - a. One of the primary functions of the assembly is to encourage and motivate the members to love and good deeds (**Heb 10: 23-25**) but today it's very structured.
 - b. The N.T. church met on a daily basis for fellowship, study, and work. **Acts 2:41-47**
4. *If we're to restore the N.T. relationship between Christians we're going to have to be together more than just once or twice a week when it's convenience.*

B. In just this lesson we've observed four things that are essential to a relationship in which admonishing, encouraging, loving can occur.

1. Brethren must have a unity that springs forth from love and understanding.
2. The relationship must be close enough so brethren will surrender to each other.
3. The love bonds must be such that Christians will be patient with each other.
4. The members of the body must develop a feeling of empathy in their struggle.
Rom. 12: 15 – Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

C. When these are sincere and present in abundance :

1. Love will dominate.
2. Encouragement will flow unbidden.
3. God will be glorified because of the light we shine.

INVITATION :

Before a light can shine, it must be lit.

Let Christ light you as His lamp and step you on His lampstand.

Accept His invitation

Lesson Texts :**Phil. 2: 1-4 (NKJV)**

Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Phil. 2: 1-4 (ESV)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil. 2: 1-4 (NIV)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil. 2: 1-4 (NASV)

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.