

Alright, it is time to think about

/// 10-1 /// **BECOMING AN ENCOURAGER**

IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS

We have attached a privileged project opportunity for you to study.

You can practice your own interpretation of the 12 “one-anothers” in the New Testament.

Two of these one-another concepts, “encourage one another” and “admonish one another”, deserve close examination since they are both crucial in our development as spiritual leaders and difficult to implement in a godly and effective way.

In closing our session on ***Relationships with fellow believers*** we want provide some practical help in these areas.

A. Encouragement

One benefit of being in the family of God is the mutual encouragement that believers can give to one another. Not only is encouragement a privilege, it is required of each believer as he obeys God and lives out his faith in Christ.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25.

Question 1: What three things are we told to do on the basis of our redemption in Christ and the resultant access to God?

Far from being an isolated element of ministry reserved for pastors, encouragement is the duty and privilege of every believer.

But pastors should set the example.

Because the Spirit of God lives in us and because we all have a personal knowledge of God and His Word, we all possess the potential for effective ministry toward our fellow believers.

But, while the church can be a rich reservoir of spiritual strength, unfortunately often conflict and division are more characteristic than healing, encouragement, and security.

How, then, can we become encouragers?

B. Becoming an encourager

Talking about encouragement is easy; becoming an encourager is more difficult. Basically a commitment to, and development of, a few specific skills are what is necessary to become an effective encourager.

Becoming an encourager begins with a very specific kind of commitment.

—AN ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT TO THE GOOD OF OTHERS.

It must be our desire to see the needs of others met even if ours go unmet.

Without this basic perspective we will almost always let our own selfish desires and needs get in the way of effective ministry to others.

This may seem like an unrealistic goal, because if we put the needs of others first *all the time* then our own spiritual lives will become weak. However, we are not saying that we put our ministry to others ahead of our own spiritual development.

On the contrary, the encourager must maintain a vital relationship with God.

What we are saying is that *in our relationships with others we seek to meet their needs rather than expecting them to meet ours.*

To keep perspective on this issue we need to distinguish between “desires” and “goals.”

Our **GOAL** is to meet the needs of others.

It may be our **desire** that they meet some need of ours, but, if this ever becomes **our goal** in a relationship, then we can no longer adequately meet the needs of the other person.

For example, when a father comes home from a very busy day at work, what he wants to do most is have a few moments of peace and quiet to relax.

But, when he walks through the door, he has a little boy who has been waiting expectantly for him to come home.

Now he can do one of two things.

On the one hand, if he is more concerned about his own needs being met, he can ask the boy not to bother him for a few minutes while he relaxes; or he can ask his wife to occupy him for a while (which she has been doing all day—now she needs a break!), so that he can have his desired tranquility.

In so doing he has made the meeting of his needs his goal.

On the other hand, if his goal is to meet the needs of his family, then, while he may **desire** to get his peace and quiet, he is willing to lay aside his needs and give his son the attention that he needs and wants.

By doing this he has become an encourager to his family. Beginning with a commitment to the needs of others, we must also develop certain skills.

1) The first of these is to **become a GOOD LISTENER.**

We have all gone through the frustration of trying to explain our feelings or opinions only to receive a response from the listener revealing that they have totally missed our point. Nothing is quite as useless and irritating as hastily given advice that reflects little understanding of a problem.

Not only does failure to listen lead to poor understanding, it also gives the impression that we are *uninterested* in the other person's problems.

Being good listeners, with good eye contact, we communicate to people that we think that what they say is important and that their problems are of concern to us. Attentive listening demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of others.

When people perceive that we care enough to listen, they are much more likely to open up to us. Being thought of as unspiritual, bad experiences in the past, and a number of other things keep people from coming out of the shells in which they hide.

Patient listening goes a long way toward helping people drop their masks.

Good listening is more than just hearing words however.

It is also being aware of the non-verbal ways people communicate.

Careful attention to others allows us to “hear” what their drooping shoulders, sad eyes, and hurt faces are saying to us.

All of this increases the sensitivity to the real needs of people.

2) The second skill is to **SPEAK words of ENCOURAGEMENT.**

Not only do we need to learn how to listen, but we must also learn how to *speak words of encouragement.*

Words are powerful and have the ability to destroy, build up, or do relatively little, depending on how well they are chosen.

The Bible has much to say about the power of words.

Question 2 For discussion; Look up the following verses from the book of Proverbs that illustrate this point. For each reference write a brief statement on the power of words.

► **And then discuss it!**

- a. Proverbs 12:25 _____
- b. Proverbs 15:1 _____
- c. Proverbs 15:2 _____
- d. Proverbs 15:4 _____
- e. Proverbs 16:24 _____
- f. Proverbs 18:21 _____
- g. Proverbs 25:11 _____
- h. Proverbs 25:23 _____

The importance of our words cannot be overestimated.
But what are we to say?

3) Thirdly, the encourager needs to learn how to ask *GOOD QUESTIONS*.

Thoughtful questions can be the key to people letting us minister to them.
Questions should reflect care and concern as we seek to let them know that in us they have one who welcomes opportunities to listen.

4) Fourthly, we also must learn how to *EXPRESS OUR EXPERIENCE* of Christ and our knowledge of the Word in an encouraging way.

In doing this, two extremes should be avoided.
The first is the temptation to quote Scripture verses in the face of any problem.
Reactions against this sort of input are not because people do not want to hear what the Word of God says about their problems but rather against the insensitivity that accompanies these thoughtless quotations.

The other extreme is failure to offer spiritual insight because we feel we do not know enough.
One does not have to have a seminary degree to know enough Bible to help someone.
This fear is often based on the wrong assumption the idea that we have to “solve” the problem.
In reality, our thoughtful concern and personal care are in themselves powerful instruments of encouragement, even if we say little of a “spiritual” nature or cannot provide the “answer” to the problem. Our lack of Biblical knowledge should not keep us from helping others but rather should motivate us to deeper study.

5) The fifth and final skill will enhance our ability to encourage others.

This is the ability to discern and do helpful deeds.

We can encourage a lonely brother with a visit, a burdened friend by sharing some of his burdens, an over-worked and tired colleague by either helping where appropriate or with a phone call or letter of appreciation and thanks.
Thoughtful deeds can be powerful tools of encouragement.

Pause for a minute to consider what we have said about encouragement.

Question 3 3 If we are to be a real encouragement to others what five areas do we need to be developing?

Listen well, speak wisely, ask good questions, express personal experiences, do good deeds

/// 10-2 /// **INTERACT!!!** Add your own additional thoughts and comments to the above.

/// 10-3 /// **Practical Opportunity 1**

At home evaluate your own skill as an encourager in light of the above thoughts. Record in your notebook some thoughts for each area.

May you and your church find a new fullness in Christ as you apply some of these truths over the next 3 months.

/// 10-4 /// **Building relationships is God's way!**

Building relationships is Christ's example!

Building relationships is your spiritual invitation!

Building relationships is what heaven is made of!

Let us practice building relationships here on earth!

Praise God. Amen and Amen.
Do I hear some amens? HALLELUJAH.

(Answer to question # 1. According to Hebrews we are (1) to come before God with the assurance of His acceptance, (2) to cling steadfastly to the hope of eternal life, and (3) to give serious thought to how we can encourage other believers to grow in love and obedience.)