

THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Many times we have noticed that even without doing anything like holding meetings, providing funds or moving in the spiritual gifts, and often with no more than going to see people, listening, talking and spending time with them in their homes, people somehow seem to find courage to carry on, to go further, do more, and attempt new things. People can be extraordinarily appreciative and grateful, far more so than we could expect. Why is this ? We have often asked the same question ?

Encouraging others is something we can all do, all the more so as our roles are changing with our ages and we are becoming people who encourage the younger leaders with our friendship, prayer, experience and resources.

Meaning of the word 'encouragement':

1. to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence.
2. to stimulate by assistance, approval.
3. to promote or advance, from old French: *encorag*, (Spanish *en corazón*): to give heart.

MY WAY OF RELEASING THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

1. I pray: It is no longer I that lives, but Christ who lives in me, therefore my prayer is Christ in me, live out your life through me because I, even at my best which is not often, am never sufficient or good enough. 'I' has to die, He has to live through me.

2. I get my attitude right: I ask, "Who can I bless, serve, encourage or add value to today?" One man gets up in the morning and asks "Who can I bless, who can I serve today?" Another man gets up and asks, "Who will bless and serve me today." Which man goes to bed satisfied, succeeding in life and having meant something to someone that day. Which man does not and why not?

3. I encourage myself: I have to learn to encourage myself in the Lord, despite how I feel, what the news is, and everything contrary that can depress me, as David did at Ziklag,¹ Samuel 30.6. If you wait for someone to come and encourage you might wait a long time so it is good to learn not to wait but to encourage yourself in the Lord, find new heart in Jesus and in His word. In any event what happens to you will be useful to comfort, console and encourage others, all the same Bible word for encourage.

4. I make time for people. You may not have other gifts but you have got that gift of time in a busy world, most people say they have no time. Make time to welcome people, or let God send you to them even if it means a long journey.

5. I learn to listen. And be seen to be listening, repeat words, respond, show attention, ask questions, find common ground. Listen inwardly as well, what to say will come from your heart before your head.

6. I don't know all the answers. You do not have to speak unless you have something to say, sometimes there is nothing to say, love fills the gaps between the words, touch, smile, shed tears, make a cup of tea, listen, be there.

Romans 15:5 says that it is God who gives endurance and encouragement, and He may well give it through you just being there.

In Acts 4.36 we meet Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Bar-nabas (which means "son of encouragement"). He sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet, who were probably very encouraged by that ! But to gain a nickname like that, his real name being Joseph, indicates the kind of man he was, and we imagine that he was a very welcome visitor in many homes.

We can ask God to allow the same manifestation of the Holy Spirit that was in Barnabas to be in us and flow out from us. This is a lovely ministry and there is not enough of it. Romans 12.8 tells us that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is that of encouraging, so as long as we remember that the best gifts of God are placed on the bottom shelf which means a bending and lowering of ourselves to reach out for them, this is a gift that I am sure God will be pleased to give us if we ask.

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